

E. J. Moeran's Symphony No. 2 in E flat

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This article makes available for the first time a transcription of the only known source for E. J. Moeran's unfinished Second Symphony: a pencil short score housed at the University of Melbourne.¹ This manuscript, in Moeran's hand, is incomplete, trailing off at several points and breaking off after seventeen pages; a number of sketches can be found on the reverse sides of the manuscript pages (all of which use one side only), and I have included the three most significant fragments in an appendix to the transcription. Despite being incomplete, with some interruptions, the autograph score is nevertheless substantial, and gives a fairly complete impression of what Moeran envisaged. His work on the symphony has been documented by Rhoderick McNeill and Geoffrey Self, and I will provide no more than a brief outline of the work's genesis with a view to dispelling some of the confusion that has surrounded the work and, more specifically, the manuscript.² I will discuss the manuscript as well as some of the possible reasons for Moeran's evident difficulties in finishing the work.

The earliest mention of the symphony is contained in a letter to May Harrison, dated Whit Sunday, 1939:

My other musical activity [besides working on the Violin Concerto] consists of going up the mountain & filling pages of notebooks with ideas I am working out for another symphony. I might actually commence the actual composition thereof in the winter when the concerto & also the short pfte & orchestra work are, I hope, finished. It will be entirely different to No. 1. I may say I think I have hit on a winner for my opening subject, thanks to the view from Moll's Gap

¹ It was originally given to the Victorian College of Arts, Melbourne, by Moeran's widow, Peers Coetmore. The College was recently incorporated into the University of Melbourne.

² See Rhoderick McNeill, 'Moeran's Unfinished Symphony', *The Musical Times*, 121, no. 1654 (December 1980), 771–7, and his subsequent letter, *The Musical Times*, 122, no. 1658 (April 1981), 230 (see also his doctoral dissertation, *A Critical Study of the Life and Works of E. J. Moeran*, University of Melbourne, 1982); Geoffrey Self, *The Music of E. J. Moeran* (London: Toccata Press, 1986). Neither McNeill nor Self had access to Moeran's letter to May Harrison (see note 3), which represents his earliest reference to the Second Symphony and is hence significant in establishing a timeline.

looking across to the Reeks & Killarney Lakes 1000 ft below on a brilliant spring morning. There will be no gloom or Atlantic in winter in No. 2.³

This demonstrates that the Second Symphony began occupying Moeran's thoughts long before he completed the Violin Concerto in 1942 (the same, incidentally, goes for the *Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra*, the second work referred to in the letter). Several versions of the symphony were attempted, but only the incomplete Melbourne version survives. At first it was supposed that other versions had been lost, but it seems more likely that they were destroyed by the composer. There has been some speculation over whether the extant manuscript represents Moeran's final thoughts on the work, or whether a later version was destroyed; as I will discuss below, the latter seems highly unlikely. The manuscript contains what appears to be the bulk of a substantial single-movement symphonic structure, including a lengthy first section that has some similarities with a sonata exposition, two further sections (suggesting 'scherzo' and 'slow movement') in various stages of completion, and a short transitional passage that suddenly ceases.

If Moeran began planning and collecting ideas for the symphony in 1939, it is unclear how far he progressed at that stage, or how much progress he made (if any) between that initial phase and the time, in late 1945, when he began work in earnest (a brief chronology of Moeran's work on the symphony is given in Table 1). This took place soon after the completion of the Cello Concerto in October 1945, and in January 1946 Moeran felt confident enough to announce to the *Daily Sketch* his intention of having the work completed by the next season (for John Barbirolli and the Hallé Orchestra).⁴ He had written to his wife some days previously from Kenmare:

The E flat symphony progresses, but I am a bit stuck over the slow movement, also about the finish of the first. However, I have all the material for it & it will only be a matter of time working it out.⁵

³ Given in Lewis Foreman, *From Parry to Britten: British Music in Letters 1900–1945* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1987), 214–15. The work for piano and orchestra is the *Rhapsody in F sharp*.

⁴ The notice 'New Symphony for Hallé' appeared in the *Daily Sketch* on 19 January 1946. See McNeill, 'Moeran's Unfinished Symphony', 772–3.

⁵ Letter dated 7 January 1946, quoted in McNeill, *A Critical Study*, 513.

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Table 1
Chronology

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Moeran's progress on the symphony</i> |
|--------------------|--|
| 1939 | Initial planning and sketching of ideas (the opening gesture and other material; some of the initial ideas may, of course, have been discarded later). |
| 1945 | Works on a four-movement version. |
| January 1946 | Announces projected premiere for following year. |
| First half of 1947 | Considers one-movement version at this point or earlier. |
| February 1948 | Commences 'Melbourne' version and settles on a spring 1949 premiere. Spends a substantial part of 1948 in Kenmare and reports that he is making good progress. |
| March 1948 | Composes second subject of first section. |
| May 1949 | Dissatisfied with his progress (particularly the central sections), he suggests scrapping it. Destroys some material. |
| February 1950 | Intends to rewrite the material produced 'at Cheltenham this time last year & later' (i.e., the material he was dissatisfied with, some or all of which he had destroyed); disappears for several months soon afterwards. He appears not to have attempted any composition after this. |

By February his enthusiasm had waned, and by May 1947 he had apparently abandoned his earlier attempt. In September he played through what he had written for Lionel Hill, to whom he had confided some months previously that he was still having trouble with the form of the work, and Hill suggested a one-movement structure, 'like the Sibelius 7th'.⁶ Moeran's indication, in the *Daily Sketch* announcement, that he had been asked by Barbirolli to provide 'something compact', suggests, however, that Moeran may have had a relatively short symphony in linked movements in mind before that (there are a number of examples of linked movements in Moeran's output, a significant late example being the Cello Concerto). The single-

⁶ Lionel Hill, *Lonely Waters: The Diary of a Friendship with E. J. Moeran* (London: Thames Publishing, 1985), 71.

movement framework may of course have solved some of the problems alluded to in the letter above, as the first movement now did not need an ending, and the slow movement could be much shorter. Work on the symphony continued during the next few months, and by 9 February 1948 the date for its first performance had been settled for spring 1949. The Melbourne version bears the date 11 February 1948, suggesting that Moeran was at this point confident of being able to produce a final version for performance, presumably to be constructed largely from existing material. Work continued steadily until October, but was subsequently intermittent, as Moeran underwent treatment for alcoholism. On 12 May 1949, he wrote to his wife from Cheltenham, where he was being treated:

I am still worried about my symphony; the form of it is bothering me; I set out to write a work in one big movement incorporating the essentials of four, but as I get near the end, I am more & more in doubt whether I haven't [*sic*] failed.⁷

A month later he was still despondent:

... I am not inclined to let go what I believe to be second rate. I shall have to scrap this symphony as it now is, nearly finished, & start afresh on something quite different. As to the writing of it, the 'venue' is wrong. If I were in Southern Ireland I could work it out & finish it, but it is absolutely & irreconcilably [*sic*] impossible to do it here. It started by being Irish, & if I try & put it right here, it only ends up being pastiche Irish. ... It's a pity, because the first part of the Symphony is so good i.e. what I wrote in Ireland & shortly afterwards.

...

I have had to go back in this symphony right to the beginning & I find that, if I go on with the idea, it means scrapping the whole of the middle part as it now exists.⁸

It is clear that Moeran felt obliged to remain in Cheltenham and continue his treatment, despite the fact that he felt this to be obstructing his creativity and ultimately his chances of completing the symphony. As it turned out, this course of action was unsuccessful in any case, as he eventually abandoned his treatment and in August disappeared for several months. He resurfaced in December and again underwent treatment for alcoholism, more successfully it seems. At the end of January 1950 he made a preliminary trip to Ireland to find a suitable place to work, following which he returned to England to collect some belongings. By late February his outlook towards the symphony was more positive:

⁷ Letter to Peers Coetmore, dated 11/12 May 1949. Quoted in McNeill, *A Critical Study*, 620.

⁸ Letter to Peers Coetmore, dated 14 June 1949. McNeill, *A Critical Study*, 630–1.

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I have postponed the production of the Symphony until Cheltenham 1951 ... I have not been sufficiently satisfied with a lot of it [*sic*] I wrote at Cheltenham this time last year & later. My 3 weeks in Eire seems to have done me great mental good, as I now see what was wrong with it & I feel sure that in the lovely air, congenial home and beautiful scenery of Delgany [in Co. Wicklow], I shall forge right ahead.⁹

More significant, however, is a previous mention, in mid-January, of 'the short score of the nearly completed symphony of which ... I destroyed a lot and rewrote', suggesting that Moeran had at that point already destroyed at least some of the material he was dissatisfied with.¹⁰ It follows that he was afterwards reasonably happy with the existing material, or at least its potential, as reflected by his optimism in the letter of 25 February, quoted above.

Moeran's optimism continued once he returned to Ireland, arriving on 10 March; for around ten days, work on the symphony and some other music seems to have gone well, and he reported putting in 'satisfactory hours' and '2 solid days'.¹¹ It has been suggested that he then received some alarming news about his health, as he began drinking heavily and disappeared at the end of March.¹² He surfaced briefly in Dublin, but disappeared again, arriving in Kenmare on 16 June. There he appears to have lived quietly until his death in December. He seems not to have attempted any further work on the symphony, which perhaps suggests that he did not expect to be able to finish it. He was evidently afraid that his mental state was deteriorating; according to his brother Graham, Moeran wrote to his mother a few days before he died, expressing the fear that he would be certified insane and committed to an asylum.¹³ He had had fears about his mental state before, as he wrote to his wife in October 1948:

⁹ Letter to Peers Coetmore, dated 25 February 1950. McNeill, *A Critical Study*, 658.

¹⁰ Letter to Peers Coetmore, dated 14/15 January 1950. McNeill, *A Critical Study*, 313.

¹¹ Letters to Peers Coetmore, dated 13 and 16 March 1950. McNeill, *A Critical Study*, 669–71.

¹² This idea is based on speculation by Moeran's brother Graham, which he communicated to Peers Coetmore in a letter dated 6 December 1950, given in Hill, 152. He specifically conjectured that Moeran had been warned 'of the danger of something pressing on his brain, or of the state of his heart'. However, he makes clear that this was personal speculation, noting that Moeran 'confided [the nature of his illness] to no one'. Graham further ventured that 'the illness which finally proved fatal was of such a character that nothing, so far as I've been able to gauge, could have been done to give him back his powers of creative thought again'; letter to Peers Coetmore, dated 15 December 1950 (I am grateful to Barry Marsh for sharing this information with me). These ideas are taken up in McNeill (*A Critical Survey*, 316–7), Self (225–6) and Hill (151).

¹³ Graham Moeran reported this in a letter to Peers Coetmore (6 December 1950), given in Hill, 152. For accounts of Moeran's last days and death, see Self, *The Music of E. J. Moeran*, and McNeill, *A Critical Survey*.

I could not face up to things ... the result ... was a complete nervous breakdown, loss of memory, absolute insomnia day and night and other symptoms of a mental nature. Several times I went to the river when it was in flood with the idea of going in and ending things.¹⁴

His friend Pat Ryan (principal clarinettist with the Hallé Orchestra) visited him during his final months in Kenmare and discussed the symphony with him, which he described as ‘almost, if not wholly, finished’.¹⁵ After Moeran’s death, Ryan searched Kenmare for traces of a manuscript and, through *The Irish Times*, called for anyone with information on the work to come forward; this search was unsuccessful, however.¹⁶ It seems that the manuscript Moeran had been working on (almost certainly the Melbourne version) had remained in Delgany, Co. Wicklow.

It was Ryan’s widely-publicized opinion—that the most up-to-date version of the score had been lost—which led to the idea of a separate ‘almost, if not wholly, finished’ version of the symphony. His assumption that Moeran had brought a manuscript of the symphony to Kenmare is unfortunate and became the primary cause of confusion, yet it is clear from his comments that he had not ever seen this manuscript himself.¹⁷ Moeran had left his papers in Wicklow (indeed he had brought almost nothing with him to Kenmare), from where they were retrieved after his death but apparently without being properly evaluated. Ryan’s insistence that a complete or almost complete version of the work existed is also problematic; it is clear that the various sections of the work neared or reached completion at different times, but it is also clear that (with the possible exception of the first section) they were not completed to Moeran’s satisfaction, and that large stretches were periodically destroyed. Furthermore, Moeran’s description of the work as ‘almost complete’ is problematic, as it could conceivably apply to the existing manuscript (which requires some ironing out and elaboration, plus a recapitulatory final section—all the ‘raw material’ is there, at

¹⁴ Letter to Peers Coetmore, dated 25 October 1948. McNeill, *A Critical Survey*, 575.

¹⁵ Letter (‘Missing Symphony’) of 17 January 1951 from Pat Ryan to *The Irish Times*, published 22 January 1951. As we will see, this description appears to be based on what Moeran had told him, given that Ryan does not appear to have seen the manuscript himself.

¹⁶ ‘No Sign of Symphony Manuscript’, *The Irish Times*, 6 January 1951, 9.

¹⁷ It is worth quoting the entire passage: ‘The symphony was almost, if not wholly, finished months before his death. Apart from the constant references to the work in letters to many people, including Sir John Barbirolli (for whom it was written). I spent a month in Kenmare last summer, and he not only discussed the work many time [sic] with me, but even asked my advice on various passages. I find it hard to believe that a man of E. J. Moeran’s integrity would deliberately write for nearly four years about the progress of a fictitious work.’ (‘Missing Symphony’: as note 13.) Clearly, Ryan would not have entertained such a notion if he had at any point actually seen the manuscript.

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least potentially), or he could have had rejected material in mind, for instance the final section that, according to his brother, he had already destroyed at this point.¹⁸

Given that Moeran destroyed 'a lot' of material and earlier versions of the work, it is most likely that he was still working on the Melbourne version when he went to Delgany in March 1950. It is conceivable that supplementary material was lost or destroyed at some stage, but the Melbourne version was almost certainly intended as the basis of whatever version or revision Moeran was planning when he travelled to Ireland. It is important to keep in mind that only the first page of the manuscript is dated—other pages may have been replaced; if he was satisfied with the first section, there would have been no reason for him to write it out again. The discontinuity between the sixth and seventh pages of the score supports this reasoning. There is thus no way of dating later parts of the manuscript with confidence. Following this line of argument, the first part (or indeed later parts) of the manuscript could also predate 1948, having been recycled from earlier versions; the date merely implies that a version of the score originated in February 1948—i.e., he may have written the date of a renewed attempt at the head of an existing page of manuscript.¹⁹ Similarly, later parts of the work may have recycled pages from previous attempts. Of the first section, however, it seems unlikely that Moeran would have recycled more than the first subject, as a letter to his wife dates the composition of the second subject to the first week of March 1948.²⁰ Of the subsequent material, that starting on pages 7 (the link to the scherzo which does not connect with the preceding page) and 15 (system 2 of the 'slow movement' section) seems the most likely to have been recycled.

There is no existing material for the last section, but, considering the structure of the first and the precedents of the Sinfonietta (whose finale derives its material largely from the first movement) and Violin Concerto, it seems likely that Moeran envisaged some sort of reworking of the expository material. Some of the shapes this might have taken are discussed below.

¹⁸ See Rhoderick McNeill, letter to *The Musical Times*, 1981 (as note 2).

¹⁹ There is evidence that Moeran used the primary material of an earlier version of a work as the basis for a subsequent reworking on at least one other occasion (he may have rewritten the E flat String Quartet during the early 1930s); see my article 'E. J. Moeran: Letters to Hubert Foss and Benjamin Britten', *Musical Times*, 152, no. 1916, (2011), forthcoming, for a brief discussion of this matter. Moeran may also have done something similar when rewriting his First Symphony in the mid-1930s.

²⁰ Letter to Peers Coetmore, 8 March 1948. McNeill, *A Critical Study*, 569.

Table 2
Outline of extant material²¹

| [Exposition] | Scherzo | | | [Slow movement] | |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|
| Introductory gesture and first subject: systems 1-1 to second bar of 3-4. | Second subject: third bar of system 3-4 to third bar of 6-2. | Link to scherzo (nine bars), after which the score trails off: fourth bar of system 6-2 to 6-4. | Alternate link, followed by opening of scherzo, the last part crossed out: systems 7-1 to 8-2. | Three further systems of scherzo material; score trails off. Followed by a reworking of the preceding seven bars and the rest of the scherzo: systems 9-1 to 14-4. | Slow section and link, breaking off abruptly: systems 14-5 to 17-3. |

As already noted, the first section is very near completion, with scoring indications and fully worked-out parts. The opening, like that of the *Symphony in G minor*, is forthright, a brief fanfare leading to an expansive syncopated theme. As suggested by Self, this opening is not as striking as that of its predecessor, but is nevertheless emblematic of the sort of ‘spacious’ manner of symphonic writing that Moeran evidently felt to be essential to the genre (not dissimilar in effect to Sibelius, although generally different in technique).²² The almost immediate deflection from the tonic, E flat major, to E minor is unusual, and the F#–E bass is particularly effective. A second theme (system 3-4), in Moeran’s ‘lyrical’ vein (outlining the typical ‘two steps and a leap’ contour, a melodic shape found throughout his output), returns suddenly to the tonic, counterbalancing the initial deflection before leading on to F sharp minor (system 4-3). This harmonic arrangement is puzzling, a departure from traditional sonata procedure that is unique in Moeran’s output. The character and treatment of the themes are in keeping with his usual preferences in his sonata movements, but the tonal scheme seems to reverse the traditional harmonic identities of subjects—the first avoiding the tonic, the second affirming it before moving away. The extended treatment of the subjects is characteristic, and is especially apposite here given the absence of a conventional development section (the exposition is followed directly by the

²¹ Systems are marked, here and in the transcription, according to their page and system number in the original manuscript. Hence system ‘3-4’, for example, is the fourth system on the third page of Moeran’s manuscript.

²² Self, 227–8.

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scherzo). The immediate and relatively substantial development of first-theme material is particularly reminiscent of the first movement of the Cello Concerto.

First-theme material returns (last bar of system 5-2), combining with second-theme material in a sort of closing or transitional section, which again moves to E flat; this is followed by a number of abortive links or introductions to the scherzo. Several questions are raised by the harmonic and thematic distribution, principally about how Moeran might have manipulated his material in the (presumably) recapitulatory fourth section. As noted, the arrangement and character of the themes suggest a sonata exposition, and Moeran clearly declared his preference for sonata form in a letter to his wife in 1943 (for whom he was writing the Cello Concerto): 'I hope you don't mind sonata form, in spite of the dicta of our Sibelius, but I was so imbued with it for many years that I find it natural to think that way.'²³ The variation of a small amount of material to achieve the necessary expanse is typical of Moeran (recalling the Symphony in G minor), and the suddenness of the second subject entry (system 3-4) is not uncharacteristic.

Moeran considered the work to be 'in E flat'; if the immediate deflection to E minor (and perhaps the second theme's progression towards F sharp minor) were to be balanced somehow in the fourth section, the result would be a 'reversed' sonata structure, necessitating the resolution of tension accrued in the first subject as well as the second. A pertinent comparison might be with the 'diverging' secondary tonal centres of the outer movements of the Cello Concerto, where the second subject expositions and recapitulations open with references to similar (subdominant) harmony, before moving in divergent directions. In the outer movements of the Sinfonietta (and in a number of earlier works) Moeran balances the dominant orientation of the second-subject expositions with subdominant recapitulations. In the Second Symphony, how might he have balanced the harmonic motion and areas of the 'exposition' in the fourth section? (This question remains even if one assumes that Moeran was not thinking in terms of sonata construction.) There is no obvious need to adopt the unusual tonal scheme of the first section, so it seems likely that he had a specific plan in mind (and also that this was not the primary cause of his problems in finishing the work, as a reworking of the harmonic areas of the initial section would be relatively straightforward). The only indication of what Moeran may have planned, a sketch of an *adagio* theme combining material from both subjects in D flat major, will be discussed below.

²³ Letter to Peers Coetmore, dated 26 October 1943. McNeill, *A Critical Study*, 422.

The influence of Elgar may be relevant to the tonal scheme, mirroring the opposition, in Elgar's First Symphony, of A flat major and A minor/D major (resembling Moeran's E flat major – E minor – F sharp minor scheme).²⁴ The influence of Vaughan Williams may also be relevant. As is generally the case in Moeran's music, the direct influence of Sibelius is precluded by fundamental disparities of technique (in the construction of material and articulation of structure), and is generally limited to occasional gestural similarities. In the *Sinfonietta*, for instance, Sibelian gestures (such as those found in the development section of the first movement) are contained within the clear and traditional formal/structural outlines and Moeran's direct expressive style. The Symphony in G minor is an exception, as Moeran attempts a more profound approximation of Sibelian technique; the result is somewhat unsatisfactory, and in subsequent works the influence is much less pronounced (or at any rate more individual, for instance in the Cello Concerto). There are hints of a renewed engagement with Sibelian technique in the Second Symphony, and Sibelius's Seventh, Fifth and Third Symphonies may have provided some inspiration for details of construction. Although Moeran tended not to depart significantly from conventional sonata construction, it is conceivable that he did not intend to finish the work with a section functioning primarily as a conventional recapitulation. Given the likelihood of some sort of emphasis on tonic harmony (or some sort of harmonic counterbalancing, for instance by moving through subdominant areas), this is a minor point, however.

The conflicting tonal centres (or axes) are resumed in the second and third sections, beginning with a substantial scherzo with a consistent tendency towards a variety of 'sharp' keys (the ensuing slow section returns to E flat). The scherzo is in various stages of completion, with the score trailing off after only a few bars. The resumption of the E-flat-major key signature on the next page of manuscript (system 7-1) suggests that it perhaps represents an alternative link from the first section (although the apparent initial 3/8 time signature links with the previous material). Chromatic triplet figures lead to the principal scherzo material (system 9-4), two sections of which frame a jig-like contrasting segment (end of system 11-4). Some passages in the scherzo are extremely bare, with as little as a single part sketched in, suggesting that Moeran was only beginning to assemble material. The scherzo links continuously to the slow section (system 14-5, the main theme relates directly to scherzo material), which is surprisingly short; a system of unused 'slow movement' material among the sketches

²⁴ A suggestion of an Elgarian influence may be read into Moeran's comment regarding the symphony's key, E flat, 'as is Elgar's Second' (recounted by Lionel Hill, *Lonely Waters*, 71). This influence can be felt occasionally in Moeran's music, for instance in the second movement of the Cello Concerto.

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(this is given as part 2 of the appendix to the transcription) suggests that Moeran may have been attempting to expand this section. A brief resumption of scherzo material and allusions to the opening fanfare lead to the double bar that concludes the surviving score. It seems likely that this would have linked to the fourth and final section.

There are only two gaps in the score—one between the first and second sections (between systems 6-4 and 7-1), the other near the opening of the scherzo (between systems 8-2 and 8-3): both are indicative of indecision regarding the progression from exposition to scherzo. The second gap is minor, and a link could easily be effected. The existing material thus seems relatively complete, and it is a great shame that there is no concrete evidence as to what Moeran planned to do in the final section, as any discussion of his probable intentions must now be highly speculative. Useful comparisons might, however, be made with the Violin Concerto and Sinfonietta. The outer movements of both are clearly linked, most obviously through the use of related material. While in the Concerto Moeran seeks to transcend the tension of the first movement (G major) in a glowing D major ending, in the Sinfonietta the finale closely mirrors the structure of the opening movement. As in several other works (including the first movement of the Violin Concerto), he uses a subdominant orientation in the second-subject recapitulation to balance the dominant tension accrued in the exposition. Some sort of comparable 'harmonic inversion' or counterbalancing could be useful in the fourth section of the Second Symphony, for instance in an $A\flat$ -A- $E\flat$ progression, although the possibility of progressive/directional tonality should not be discounted. A 'sublimated' ending in a key such as B flat or A flat is at least conceivable. A more Sibelian conception, with the tonic acting as an anchor from which to depart episodically (as in the first section, but with more consistent emphasis on tonic harmony, or a preponderance of subdominant-orientated episodes), might also be conjectured, in which case the Seventh Symphony would have been a significant model after all. It seems very likely, however, that Moeran intended to address the tension created between the tonal axes in some form, which would inevitably invite comparisons with sonata construction.

As mentioned above, the only indication of what Moeran may have planned for the fourth section is a sketched theme on the reverse side of page 15 of the manuscript (this is given, along with two other brief sketches, in the appendix to the transcription). It is marked *adagio*, is in D flat and clearly derives from the opening material, with the second subject entering in the last system. Keeping in mind that this is slight evidence to use as a basis for speculation, we may interpret it in a number of ways—it signals Moeran's intention to introduce a slow segment into the final section, although its structural significance must remain unclear. Was it intended as a digression (for instance within a developmental segment or before or during a coda)? Or would it have occupied an essential structural role? If the latter, it seems most likely that it

would have acted as a second subject, and the key of D flat could balance the keys used in the exposition, for instance by moving to E minor (instead of F sharp minor as in the exposition), from where the approach to the tonic could reverse the initial E flat to E minor deflection at the outset of the work. In the absence of further evidence, such speculation is of limited usefulness, however.

Why did Moeran fail to complete the Second Symphony during a prolonged period that produced such mature and accomplished works as the Sinfonietta and the works for cello? A number of possible factors may be considered. Certainly, Moeran's reliance on environmental inspiration may have been a hindrance.²⁵ He repeatedly referred to his inability to work satisfactorily in England, away from the environment in Ireland that had initially inspired the work. Many of Moeran's mature works are closely associated with specific locations; the Violin Concerto is his 'most Irish' work, the first that he felt compelled to complete in the environment that inspired it ('Having started my concerto [in Kerry], I want to finish it in the same surroundings').²⁶ Given that he began planning the Second Symphony in Ireland while working on the Violin Concerto, it is understandable that he took a similar view with the later work. The perceived positive effect of Ireland (as a suitable place to live and work) on the Symphony in G minor probably strengthened this view.

From a technical point of view, Moeran appears to have struggled with the form, particularly that of the middle section (although the current format of transition – scherzo – trio – scherzo – slow movement seems logical and appropriate, perhaps the difficulties lay in details rather than the overall outline). The finale may also have caused him problems, but there is no indication as to how far he progressed; Moeran's brother Graham claimed that he did sketch a final section, but was not satisfied and destroyed it.²⁷ A number of factors may have contributed to these difficulties, including a somewhat self-conscious engagement with the historically prestigious symphonic tradition, something that had already caused him problems in his first symphony. Comparisons with the symphonies of Elgar and Sibelius, which (according to Lionel Hill) were in his mind from an early stage, would certainly not have been

²⁵ See my article, 'The Construction of Nature in the Music of E. J. Moeran', *Tempo*, 63, no. 248 (Spring, 2009), 35–44, for further discussion of this matter.

²⁶ In a letter to Hamilton Harty, dated 8 September 1937. Quoted in *Self*, 135.

²⁷ Graham Moeran's assertion was made to Julian Herbage, who had discovered the manuscript of the Second Symphony among Arnold Bax's papers (Bax was Moeran's literary executor). See McNeill, letter to *The Musical Times*, 1981 (as note 2).

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helpful.²⁸ The full implications of these influences might have become clearer had any material for the final section survived. Arguably, by establishing a point of reference outside his own music from the outset (whether the symphonic tradition in general, or specific instances), Moeran was setting himself a problem that he did not have the temperament to overcome, and as the years wore on, amid several unsuccessful attempts to make progress on the symphony, this issue would have become increasingly troubling.

The fact that work on the score was stretched over the last decade of Moeran's life is also problematic, as his style evolved considerably during this period. Although in practice this generally contributes to a sense of contrast rather than incongruity in the existing version, it may well have caused Moeran some difficulty. Aside from the unorthodox tonal arrangement, the style of the principal material is characteristically 'conservative' Moeran, with more striking harmony in the transitional sections (for instance systems 3-1 and 5-2). The style of the late works, from the *Sinfonietta* onwards, represents a distinct advance on that of the *Violin Concerto*, and he may have found it difficult to reconcile the stylistic disparity arising from his evident desire to retain the 'original' material. This is regrettable, given that (as in the *Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra*) many of the principal thematic ideas and their expository statements are less attractive than those found in other works of the period, while continuations and transitions are often more interesting.²⁹ This creates a particular tension between the earlier and later styles, and may go some way towards explaining Moeran's difficulties in combining 'original' and new material.

A certain sense of technical insecurity may thus have affected him, which seems particularly unfortunate in light of the technical accomplishment and stylistic maturity of the music Moeran produced while already working on the *Second Symphony*. One could indeed argue that, after the mature style and technical mastery of the *Cello Sonata*, Moeran was better placed than ever before to complete the work satisfactorily; however, he could not work through the problems it posed, and his final attempts were impeded by his deteriorating mental state.

²⁸ Hill, 71.

²⁹ Jack Westrup diplomatically referred to the *Rhapsody* as 'thematically less distinguished than some of Moeran's other works'. J. A. Westrup, 'E. J. Moeran', in A. L. Bacharach (ed.), *British Music of Our Time* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1946), 175–84: 182. Comparisons between the *Rhapsody* and the *Second Symphony* more generally are fruitless, however, as Moeran approached the *Rhapsody* with little enthusiasm, using a fairly conventional formal and tonal scheme.

Preface to the transcription

The transcription is based on the autograph manuscript: Ms 25 in the E. J. Moeran Collection, Lenton Parr Music, Visual and Performing Arts Library, University of Melbourne, Australia. The source has seventeen continuously numbered pages of short score (pencil), with some discontinuities, as well as two additional pages of ink score (18 bars), corresponding closely to the beginning of the pencil portion of the manuscript, with only a few additions (see notes 1 and 4, below). There are an additional eleven pages of sketches on some of the reverse sides (for the score itself the composer used only one side of each page), most of which are insignificant. The three most interesting sketches are given in the appendix to the transcription.

I have maintained in the transcription the exact number of bars per system of the source; the manuscript's page and system numbers are given at the beginning of each system. On the most crowded systems, note alignment has occasionally been sacrificed for the sake of clarity. Time signatures are given on the upper staff only, in line with Moeran's initial indication and many later indications. I have added missing time signatures, key signatures and clefs (all of which are numerous); they are identified as editorial additions by asterisks (*). I have added missing key signatures only at the beginning of systems. (In cases where Moeran added parts on empty staves in bars other than the first bar in a system, the same key signature is assumed to apply, and I have not added cautionary key signatures.)

Instrumentation indications in the source are often written on the staves; I have placed them above or below for ease of reading. Instrumentation indications originally given to the left of the staff (i.e., outside the system margins) are given in square brackets above the clefs. Moeran uses capital letters in some of his instrumentation indications; with the exception of 'CB' and 'SD', I have used lowercase throughout. Some apparently erased notes are still clearly legible: I have included some information on these in the annotations listed below. A number of accidentals have apparently been omitted from the manuscript; where these are particularly obvious, I have added them in brackets, usually above or below the note. Moeran sometimes repeats accidentals within bars; I have omitted redundant repetitions. Unclear annotations are given in square brackets with a question mark. Obvious or probable errors are reproduced as they appear in the manuscript, and I have provided comments on them in the numbered annotations listed below. Crossed-out sections have been reproduced as faithfully as possible and marked as 'crossed out' in square brackets (in order to differentiate them clearly from other markings).

E. J. Moeran's Symphony No. 2 in E flat

Listed below are annotations to the transcription, detailing unclear points or noteworthy features, referenced in the transcription by the numbers in parentheses:

1. G present only in ink score (no note is given in the pencil score).
2. Inner B \flat possibly erased.
3. The indication 'vns con sord' is present in both the pencil and ink scores; in the former it is followed by a question mark.
4. This annotation is present in both the ink and pencil scores, suggesting that the ink score does not represent the beginning of a more advanced version.
5. These alternatives are sketched on lower staves in the pencil score; the ink score maintains the original as given on the fourth staff.
6. # not given in pencil score, but present in ink score.
7. Only the top line of notes is present in the pencil score, the lower notes are taken from the ink score.
8. The inner note appears to be a B, although previous instances suggest an A.
9. The inner note appears to be an F \sharp , although previous instances suggest an E.
10. The top note of this last semiquaver chord appears to be an F \sharp , but could be a G.
11. Flutes indicated as doubling, possibly at the octave.
12. The clef, key signature and indication 'tpt' have been erased, but are still clearly visible.
13. The 'cor' of '3 cor' is somewhat faint, and was probably erased, given the same indication in the next bar.
14. Lower octave doublings of the B \flat and C \flat bass notes appear to have been erased.
15. Some material, apparently a key signature and some notes, have been erased after the indication 'fag'.
16. Small arrows appear to indicate the voicing F \sharp -A and C \sharp -F \sharp in the upper (bass clef) voices.
17. C \natural accidentals, here and in the flute part, appear to have been erased.
18. The C \sharp and C \natural are somewhat unclear; they could be B \sharp and B \natural .
19. This staff is erroneously given a bass clef at the beginning of the system.
20. The quaver A is clearly visible, but appears to have been erased.
21. The F notehead is clearly visible, but appears to have been erased.

22. The change of key signature here is unclear, with two unclear accidentals given on the upper two staves only; the next system has no key signatures, suggesting that the same applies to the horn part after 'Tempo I'.
23. The score trails off at this point, with five empty staves below this incomplete system.
24. Although Moeran sometimes neglects to give key signatures, particularly on staves where instruments enter a number of bars after the beginning of the system, it seems likely that from this point onwards a key signature without flats (or sharps) is intended (as continued in the next system). There are signs of erased notes and barlines – perhaps the key change was accidentally erased or omitted amid revisions.
25. There may be some confusion over accidentals here, particularly on the last quaver – perhaps the D should be sharpened as on earlier and later instances when it remains sharpened for the duration of the bar. In this case the $D\sharp$ only applies to the upper voice, which seems more likely than either $B\sharp + D\flat$ or $B\flat + D\flat$.
26. No indication of instrumentation (presumably timpani).
27. No clefs are given on the upper four staves. This seems the most likely arrangement.
28. No clef is given. The system starts with two staves, enlarged to three for the last bar. A bass clef and parallel diminished fifths in semiquavers seem more likely than parallel major seconds, and there is no apparent reason for an A double sharp spelling. That said, $B\sharp-C$ also seems unlikely. The third staff could conceivably represent an alternative to the part on the second staff, but the resulting septachord on the first beat would be extremely uncharacteristic. If we assume that the two upper staves of the next system represent the continuation of the two lower staves here, treble and bass clef, respectively, seems the most likely arrangement.
29. There are a number of inconsistencies in the use of accidentals.
30. The system trails off here, but (unlike on page 6 of the score, see note 23) the next system follows immediately.
31. Moeran tends to give accidentals for the voice the note occurs in; this can be confusing, particularly when there are occasional omissions. I have maintained Moeran's accidentals in this section, giving cautionary accidentals in brackets.
32. The system trails off at this point.

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33. Given the duplication of material and reversion to 9/8, this system appears to be an alternative version of the preceding seven bars.
34. At this point a chord has been crossed out. It is largely illegible, but appears to have included the D above middle C.
35. This clef is erroneously given as a treble clef.
36. This bar presumably duplicates (i.e. replaces) the last bar of the previous system.
37. The inner notes of staff 2 are somewhat smudged and difficult to decipher, and they sometimes appear to move when precedent suggests they should stay constant; this could be the result of repeated notes being written hastily. Since the smudging makes the notes unclear, I have left them unchanged throughout.
38. This may be an error: A and F on the last quaver seem the more likely inner notes.
39. The contents of five bars appear to be bracketed, although the presence of an additional bracket (indicated by the unbroken line) and what appears to be a faint or erased bracket after the first bracketed note (indicated by the dashed line) – in other words, suggesting two separate sets of brackets, enclosing only one chord each – cast some doubt on what material Moeran intended to mark. There is no indication of their significance.
40. The notes on the third staff for the rest of the system are very faint, possibly erased.
41. With the exception of the first note, the notes are less faint than in the previous system.
42. An apparent doubling error.
43. Added to an upper staff not initially included in the system.
44. Added to an upper staff not initially included in the system.
45. The chords on either side of the opening bracket were evidently triplet crotchets originally, as indicated by an apparently erased '2'.
46. One or two faint or erased notes are visible below the C on the lowest staff; they appear to be E and G, although F and A seem more likely.
47. As in the previous two systems, this staff was apparently not initially included in the system.
48. Another apparent doubling error.

49. Illegible marking, or perhaps something crossed out. The subsequent line could simply be a slur.
50. Since no natural is given, the D should probably be a D#.
51. These semiquavers are added on a line drawn beneath the stave, no instrument indicated (presumably side drum).
52. The G should be sharpened rather than the B.
53. The indication 'poco rit' makes little sense here, and there is no 'a tempo'. It could theoretically apply to the upper system (its corresponding position is indicated by the dotted line), although it seems unlikely that Moeran would have written it beneath the system when there is more space above it.
54. The D[♯] should probably be a D#; the same applies two bars later to the B/B^b, although in that case a natural is actually given in the lower part.
55. The intended rhythm here is unclear – it seems most likely that a rest is missing before the semiquavers; alternately, the semiquavers could be quavers (or a semiquaver and quaver, implying a dotted quaver rest at the start of the bar – Moeran's semiquaver beam is not entirely clear).
56. This bar is crossed out – Moeran also appears to have initially used dotted minims rather than crotchets (perhaps in line with the ensuing 3/4 time signature), apparently filling in the first two, but neglecting to change the next two.
57. The score trails off at this point, but continues on the next system.
58. The score is extremely faint here, and the bass part in the first two bars of the system is almost illegible. Likewise, the treble clef staff's crotchet A in the second bar, apart from being unclear due to a missing ledger line (although it seems unlikely that a C was intended), could be an erased note.
59. Although relatively clear, the dotted minim C could well be written carelessly, and intended to be a B^b.
60. The bracketed E^b quaver appears to have been erased, leaving a crotchet F on the second beat.
61. The last accidental (G[♯]) is unclear and could be a flat.
62. The G may have been erased.
63. The rhythm in the bass clef staff is unclear, as the rest appears to be a crotchet rest. Unless that is an error, the most likely explanation is that the initial dotted crotchet B should just be a crotchet (why would Moeran use a dotted crotchet at one octave and a crotchet tied to a quaver in another?).

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64. The bass clef staff's D is unclear; it could be a (doubled) low G.
65. The lower doubling on the treble clef staff appears to have been crossed out.
66. Some notes are almost illegible in the manuscript, and there may be some errors here.
67. The F# and G may have been erased.
68. The low note could be an F.
69. Moeran's accidentals are somewhat unclear in this bar – I have opted for what appears to be the most likely option.
70. No explanation is given for the two lines drawn above the first two bars of staves 5 and 6; given the only previous use of such a line, it is possible that Moeran intended to add percussion parts. The note in the second bar is something of a conundrum; it could be an A (perhaps one that Moeran neglected to erase), alternatively it could be a percussion part with three *tremolando* lines beneath it (for instance a snare drum roll) – the remnants of a similar (erased) note on the line above staff 5 support the latter interpretation.
71. Bars two and three of staff 5 and the rest of staff 6 are clearly in 3/4, but Moeran reverts to 9/8 in the fourth bar of staff 5 (quite abruptly, after the first beat, although he may simply have neglected to dot the crotchet).
72. 'Piatti' presumably refers to the note in the next bar.
73. Moeran has clearly reverted to 3/4 here, although the last beat of staff 4 is unclear – perhaps the first F should be dotted.
74. The manuscript trails off at this point.

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