



Ernest

# MOERAN

Chamber Music

Fidelio Trio



Ernest Moeran (1894–1950)

## Chamber Music

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Fidelio Trio  
Darragh Morgan *violin*  
Tim Gill *cello*  
Mary Dullea *piano*

with  
Nicky Sweeney *violin* <sup>(4-6)</sup>

About The Fidelio Trio:

*'The performances are absolutely wonderful [...] stylish  
virtuosity [...] instinctive brilliance [...] they get it just right'*  
BBC Radio 3 Record Review

*'[...] the Fidelio Trio give a performance of terrific impetus and refinement'*  
Gramophone

Ernest Moeran (1894–1950)

### **Sonata for Violin and Piano in E minor (1923)**

- |                                   |        |
|-----------------------------------|--------|
| 1. Allegro non troppo ma energico | [6:13] |
| 2. Lento                          | [8:17] |
| 3. Vivace e molto ritmico         | [5:32] |

### **Sonata for Two Violins (1930)**

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| 4. Allegro non troppo                      | [5:52] |
| 5. Presto                                  | [3:56] |
| 6. Passacaglia, Poco maestoso, ma con moto | [5:05] |

### **7. Prelude for Cello and Piano (1943)**

[5:10]

### **Piano Trio in D major (1920)**

- |                          |        |
|--------------------------|--------|
| 8. Allegro               | [7:06] |
| 9. Lento molto – Andante | [7:47] |
| 10. Allegro vivace       | [5:18] |
| 11. Allegro              | [6:03] |

Total playing time [66:27]



### **Ernest Moeran: Chamber Music**

Making this album of the music of Ernest J. Moeran has been something of a personal musical journey and voyage of discovery. Moeran's music has been part of our musical DNA for many years, long before we played a note of it. His love for Ireland and absorption of its music and musicians led to Moeran making Kenmare his second home from around 1934 until his death there in 1950. Our exploration dates back to Darragh's childhood experiences, listening to Vernon Handley conducting the Ulster Orchestra in performances and recordings of Moeran's Symphony in G minor. Later Darragh first visited Valentia Island, Co. Kerry as part of a Music Network solo violin tour of islands off the west coast of Ireland. Both he and Mary, like Moeran before them who lived on Valentia for two years, fell in love with the epic landscape and Mary founded their annual summer festival, 'Chamber Music on Valentia' there. It was on Valentia that Moeran actually completed his Symphony in G minor (the pencilled note on the autograph score stating that it was finished 'on Jan. 24th 1937, 2.45 p.m. Valentia Island'). Finally, there are Darragh's experiences as an Edison Fellow at the British Library, discovering revealing early recordings of Moeran's music. All this has

enveloped our aural experiences in the discovery and appreciation of this unique voice from the 1920s and '30s.

There is a strong connection to Moeran's Irish heritage: his father was born in Dublin, and Moeran's own experiences in Ireland as a military officer stationed in Boyle, Co. Roscommon after convalescence from his war injuries until 1919. We know of his interest in and enjoyment of folksong from his upbringing in rural Norfolk, but this absorption of experiences in Ireland in Boyle, even at a subconscious level appear to have influenced Moeran melodically in the traditional folk dance-like textures he embraces, particularly throughout his early Piano Trio and Violin Sonata. This language however doesn't hark purely to the English pastoral style of the day. His use of almost impressionistic harmonies throughout these works identifies Moeran as appreciating and being influenced by musical traits at play on mainland Europe at the time, as well as the influence of his teacher, John Ireland.

Each year our festival 'Chamber Music on Valentia' features prominently the music of Ernest Moeran as our honorary Festival composer. It feels special to perform his chamber works, most often in the Church of St John the Baptist in Knightstown,

Valentia Island, knowing 'Jack' (as he was known) would have regularly strolled past it on his way to experience the incredible vista that Knightstown has to offer.

On our annual trips of pilgrimage to visit his grave on the outskirts of Moeran's adopted picturesque town of Kenmare, we are always amazed how beautiful the view from his final resting place is. Even though the majority of the works on this album were written prior Moeran establishing his second home in Co. Kerry, there is something quintessentially appreciative of the folklore and majesty of the landscape that he embraced.

Moeran's **Piano Trio in D major** was composed in 1920, premiered in London's Wigmore Hall in 1921 and he later substantially revised it for publication in 1925. Other notable piano trios composed around that time include that of Ravel (1914) and indeed the influence of Ravel can be heard in this writing. Moeran's work is expansive in scale. In four movements, the opening cello melody of the 'Allegro' first movement sets a scene of contentment that doesn't take long to become energised with dotted rhythms and held climactic moments. The second movement opens with an

improvisatory cello, almost Irish slow air like tune before the display by the violin of another song-like theme, with the folk nature of the music emphasised by the drone like accompaniment exploiting the interval of a fifth. This is a movement characterised by wonderful interplay, ebb and flow between the instruments and winding together of voices. Rather episodic, Moeran takes the listener through a number of different tempi, flexibly exploring different dimensions of the 6/8 time signature. The third movement 'Allegro vivace' is full of verve and energy and with plentiful fourths in the writing, emphasising the modal and rhythmically charged folk reel quality of the 2/4 dance. Glissandi in the piano add to the exuberant flair. The 'Tranquillo' could hardly be more contrasting, and although it allows for an exploration of melody and a tight-knit melodic texture between the three instruments, Moeran doesn't allow much time to breathe with quick successions of climaxes and rather chromatic writing. The recap. of the 'Allegro vivace' leads to an even faster sweep of a coda. The final movement demonstrates another fine example of a song-like melody that unfolds, this time in the violin, before being joined by the cello and all three instruments yet again, reaching the first of many climaxes in only a matter of a few pages. A crystalline section with the strings

ruminating on the opening theme and the piano exploring pianissimo commentary, allows for some repose. A brief cyclical turn presents the opening melody of the first movement emerging just before the end as a segue to the upbeat, dancing coda.

The **Violin Sonata in E minor** from 1923 is a work that nods to influences of his teacher, John Ireland with unrelated chords, characteristic piano figurations and harmonic colour. But it is darkly dramatic and tautly constructed, not only in the cogent development of material but also the depth of emotion and extremes that are reached. The violin writing throughout accesses not only the full scale of depth and timbre of the instrument but also the range, utilising these inherent characteristics to searing intensities. The first movement immediately toys with off-beat piano syncopations and another violin line characterised by a dotted rhythm. The melodies, both lyrically flowing and more rhythmically upright, never outstay their welcome. The deep, dark, brooding second movement (a slow 'Lento') could in no doubt be influenced by Moeran's experiences as an officer in the British Army during the First World War. His own invasive surgery on a head injury has been suggested as leading to emotional instability and poor physical

and mental health later in life. This is heard in the return of the opening theme with the deep tolling triplet-like figures in the piano beneath the intense yet pianissimo rendition of the violin theme. The broad tempo allows for a real stretching of the material, a violin tune almost struggling to be released from its embryonic beginnings of that tiny interval. Not only passionate, the movement also accesses whispered moments of reflection and contemplation, although the darkness is never far away.

The third movement opens with a piano ostinato like figure in 3/4, across the bar line and a 9/8 jig time signature in the violin. This level of outward energy is reined in at two points with a suddenly sparse piano part with staccato chords, a bravely contemporary processional feel, over which the violin spins yet more melodic writing before being flung back into the nervous and nebulous music of the opening. The final section of what is in effect a 'rondo' sees Moeran throw all violinistic virtuosity at it before a triumphant E major finish.

The **Sonata for Two Violins** from 1930 came out of a period of illness when Moeran was recovering, and it provided him time to reflect on his compositional direction and ideas. The repertoire for two violins at the

time of writing this Sonata was not so expansive. Of course music harking back as far as the classical pedagogical canon of Mazas and other teacher-players existed, but Moeran would not have had an enormous catalogue of works to reference. His early studies as a violinist at Uppingham School, and understanding of the instrument are hugely apparent in both the Violin Sonata and Sonata for Two Violins on this album. The music is deftly written, with much timbral dexterity, showcase virtuosity, and heartfelt themes. The first movement of the Sonata for Two Violins is unashamedly positive with beautiful whimsical shapes and uninhibited gestures. The central movement shows off Moeran's flair for dramatic textures and fast passage work of wild abandon. Both the introductory Passacaglia theme and coda of the final movement have remnants of folk music about them, the opening material possibly a subconscious reminder of Moeran's youth in Norfolk, of songs he heard from locals there, and certainly the final coda could easily find itself being used as 'reel' dance-like material. This Sonata also demonstrates a lean approach to polyphony, a move from the harmonic writing heard in the Piano Trio and Violin Sonata and even moments of bitonality.

The shortest work on the album is the beautiful **Prelude for Cello and Piano** from 1943, a time in his life when Moeran was becoming reacquainted with the cellist Peers Coetmore whom he was to marry in 1945.

There is a breadth and range to Moeran's output, from his Symphony in G minor to concertos for violin and cello, Rhapsodies for orchestra, and songs. In the four chamber works on this album Moeran's use of melodic and harmonic turns, approach to instrumentation, and command of the strings and piano writing, has gifted us a treasure trove of focus in repertoire, utterly connected, through him, with music of places and peoples.

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### **Darragh Morgan (violin)**

Belfast born violinist and founder member of Fidelio Trio, Darragh Morgan has performed extensively throughout Europe, USA, Africa and Asia. He has performed concertos with orchestras including European Union Chamber Orchestra, Istanbul Symphony, Cyprus Chamber Orchestra, Johannesburg Philharmonic, RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, RTÉ Concert Orchestra, and Kolner Kammerorchester. A renowned exponent of contemporary music, Darragh has appeared as a soloist at Aldeburgh Festival, Philips Collection Washington DC, Wiener Konzerthaus, Osterfestival Tirol and BBC Proms Chamber Music. He has collaborated with many of the most important composers of our time, in particular Arvo Pärt, Philip Glass, John Tavener, Kevin Volans, Michael Nyman, Gerald Barry and Michael Finnissy. He regularly leads London Sinfonietta, and has also guest led The Philharmonia (Music of Today), London Symphony Orchestra (Soundhub), Ensemble Modern, Musik Fabrik, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Remix Ensemble (Porto) and Athelas Sinfonietta (Copenhagen). Darragh was violinist with the acclaimed Smith Quartet 'regarded as Britain's answer to the Kronos' (*The Guardian*) from 2005–2011

and previously Artistic Director of Baroque 2000 in South Africa. From 2009–19 he was on the violin faculty at Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and has given masterclasses at Curtis Institute, Peabody Conservatory, Central Conservatory Beijing and YST Singapore. Darragh has recorded over fifty albums for Resonus, NMC, Diatribe, Metier, Naxos, Delphian and Signum. He plays an 1848 Giuseppe Rocca violin, generously on loan from The Morgan-Rocca Instrument Trust which is administered by The Royal Society of Musicians and a fine bow made by Alfred Lamy.

[www.darraghmorgan.com](http://www.darraghmorgan.com)

### **Mary Dullea (piano)**

As soloist and chamber musician, Irish pianist Mary Dullea leads a diverse performance career internationally. Her frequent broadcasts include BBC Radio 3, Radio 4, RTHK, RTÉ Lyric FM, WQXR, Radio New Zealand and Sky Arts, Irish, French, Austrian and Italian television. Concerto appearances include RTÉ Concert Orchestra, RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra and KZN Philharmonic Orchestra. Her many CD releases include on NMC, Orange Mountain, Delphian, Altarus, Divine Art, Naxos, Resonus, Col Legno, Lorelt and MN Records, and most recently a solo piano release of music from

Iran by composers Amir Mahyar Tafreshipour and Hormoz Farhat. A sought-after interpreter of new music, Mary's expansive repertoire covers the standard piano literature as well as an ever-increasing amount of twenty-first century compositions, many of which are dedicated to her, notably with Fidelio Trio, advocates of piano trio repertoire around the world.

Mary was the curator of Soundings (an annual UK/Austrian collaborative new music festival) at the Austrian Cultural Forum London from 2008 to 2016. She has served on the jury of 'Schubert und die Musik der Moderne' International Chamber Music Competition in Graz, Austria. In 2014 she founded 'Chamber Music on Valentia' an annual chamber music festival in Co. Kerry, Ireland, with the aim of bringing chamber music performances of international standing, innovative programming and outreach and engagement programmes to this unique place.

Mary was on the piano faculty of Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama for nine years. She previously held the position of Director of Performance at University of Sheffield and since 2015 she has held this position at Royal Holloway, University of London where she is also Reader in Music.

[www.marydullea.com](http://www.marydullea.com)

**Timothy Gill (cello)** is recognised as one of the most versatile instrumentalists of his generation, equally at home in the works of Beethoven or Xenakis. He is in demand as a soloist, chamber musician and principal cellist, having led the cello sections of all the London orchestras. In 2008 he was made a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, and he is currently professor of Cello at the Guildhall School of Music. He studied in Paris, Cambridge and London, first drawing critical acclaim for his concerts in the South Bank's Park Lane Group Series, following which he was contracted to make two CDs of music for cello and piano on the Guild label. He has since toured the world as a soloist, appearing frequently with the English National Opera and the London Sinfonietta, where, in the latter, he has held the position of principal cello for many years. His most recent solo performances include engagements at the BBC Promenade series, the MiTo international music festival in Turin, 'Cello Unwrapped' at Kings Place London and with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra. He has just completed his second CD of music by American composer David Gompper for the Naxos label, recording a new cello concerto written especially for him with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He joined Fidelio Trio in 2020. Timothy plays on a cello by Francesco Ruggeri, dated 1695.



Photograph: Eoin Schmidt-Martin

## The Fidelio Trio

The 'virtuosic Fidelio Trio' (*The Sunday Times*) are Darragh Morgan (violin), Tim Gill (cello) and Mary Dullea (piano). Shortlisted for the 2016 Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards, The Fidelio Trio broadcast regularly on BBC Radio 3, RTÉ Lyric FM, WQXR, and featured on a Sky Arts documentary.

Since their debut at London's Southbank Centre, they have regularly appeared at the Wigmore Hall and Kings Place, at festivals including Spitalfields, Cheltenham, St Magnus and Huddersfield. In Ireland they regularly perform at National Concert Hall, Dublin, Kilkenny Festival and Belfast Festival as well as Shanghai Oriental Arts Centre, Beijing Modern Music Festival, Hong Kong Chamber Music Society, Singapore, Bangkok, Porto, Paris, Venice, Florence, Johannesburg, Harare, New York City, Pittsburgh, San Francisco and Boston.

Their extensive discography includes among others Ravel and Saint-Saëns for Resonus Classics; Philip Glass *Head On & Pendulum* on Orange Mountain; and Korngold and Schoenberg (*Verklärte Nacht* arr. Steuermann) for Naxos. Their previous release of French Piano Trios for Resonus was a *Gramophone* magazine Editor's Choice.

The Fidelio Trio have given masterclasses at Peabody Conservatory, Curtis Institute, NYU, Central Conservatory Beijing, Royal College of Music London and Stellenbosch Conservatorium South Africa. They have been artists-in-residence at St Patrick's College Dublin City University, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, the State University of New York, SUNY and Tufts University, Boston.

The Trio have premiered music by composers including Anna Clyne, Robert Saxton, Michael Nyman, Judith Weir, Alexander Goehr, David Fennessy and Kevin Volans.

Inspirational musicians The Fidelio Trio have collaborated with include Nicholas Daniel (oboe), Richard Watkins (horn), Joan Rodgers and Patricia Rozario (soprano), Rachel Roberts (viola), and with spoken word, author Alexander McCall Smith, T.S. Eliot prizewinning poet Sinéad Morrissey and actor Adrian Dunbar.

They often perform Beethoven Triple Concerto including recently with KZN Philhamonic Orchestra South Africa and RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland and are Artistic Directors of their annual Winter Chamber Music Festival at Belvedere House, Dublin City University.

[www.fideliotrio.com](http://www.fideliotrio.com)

## Nicky Sweeney (violin)

Nicky is in demand as a freelance chamber and orchestral musician in the UK where she has lived since she graduated from the Guildhall school of Music and Drama. She studied with David Takeno and won every violin competition during her time there. She has been assistant leader/principal second in the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Nash Ensemble, Manchester Camerata and London Mozart Players. She frequently records music for television, film and pop in London and loves playing different types of music. Highlights include recording and live shows with Stevie Wonder. Nicky has been assistant leader of Irish Chamber Orchestra for over twenty years and loves her connection with Ireland. She has been very lucky to lead the orchestra on several major tours, in South America, Europe and the USA. She has played numerous concertos, double concertos and chamber music with her fabulous colleagues.

This recording was generously supported by:

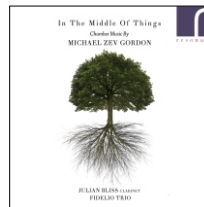


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