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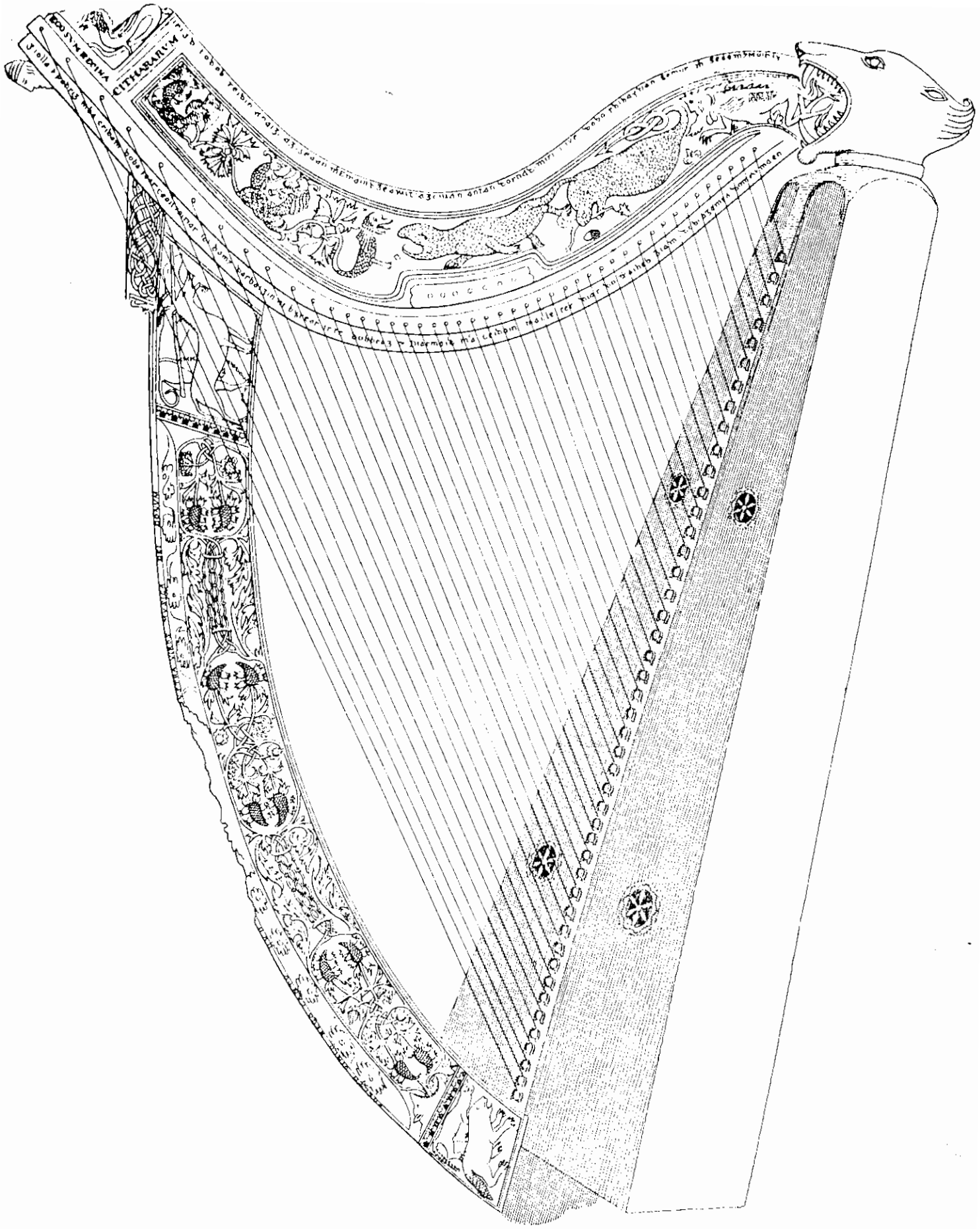

Ancient Irish Harp, in the possession of Noah Dalway Esq.
Bellahill, near Carrickfergus.

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PREFACE

It is an extraordinary fact, that although Ireland has from a remote antiquity, been celebrated for its cultivation of Music, and admitted to be one of the parent countries of that delightful art, the present is the first General collection of its national airs. Most of them are of such ancient origin, that the names of their authors, and the era in which they were composed, are alike unknown.

The works of some of its latest composers, as Conolan and Carolan, have before been selected; but of these it remained to this day to give accurate copies; while the superior productions of their masters, on whom they had formed their stile, and of whose excellence they have fallen short, are now only partially known in the very Country where they once flourished. To rescue them from oblivion, and to open a new source of Musical delight, the public are now presented with the first Volume of such a collection, as has for along time been eagerly desired.

A brief account of the circumstances which led to this Collection will naturally be expected.

The rapid decrease of the number of itinerant Performers on the Irish Harp, with the consequent decline of that tender and expressive Instrument, gave the first idea of assembling the remaining Harpers dispersed over the different Provinces of Ireland. A meeting of them was accordingly procured at a considerable expence, by the Gentlemen of Belfast on the 12th of July 1792, and liberal Premiums were distributed amongst them, according to their respective merits.

The compiler of this Volume was appointed to attend on that occasion, to take down the various airs played by the different Harpers, and was particularly cautioned against adding a single note to the old melodies, which would seem from inferences, that will afterwards be drawn, to have been preserved pure & handed down unalloyed, through a long succession of ages.

A principal motive to convene this assemblage of the remnant of the Irish Bards, was to procure, while yet attainable, the most approved copies of tunes already in the hands of practitioners, as well as to revive and perpetuate a variety of others extremely ancient of which there was no copies extant and which were therefore likely to become extinct.

This end was, in agreat degree, secured by the meeting alluded to; and it has since been perfected by the editor of the present work, who made a tour through a principal portion of the Kingdom for the purpose of comparing the Music already procured, with that in the possession of Harpers in other parts, and of making such additions as would render the work complete.

The work is now before that tribunal, which is the natural Judge of its merits, it may however without presumption, be alleged, that while public taste shall remain sufficiently pure and unadulterated, to be capable of admiring strains which lead directly to the heart, the ancient Music of Ireland will be studied with increasingdelight. The performer will recollect that the Music of a Country and its language are analagous. There are idioms and characteristical delicacies in both, to enter into the spirit of which some time and practice are requisite: And this is peculiarly the case with those compositions, which are the productions of a very distant period. We may be permitted to mention a few of the reasons which lead us to believe, that some portions of the following Music are of high antiquity. Most of the performers convened at the meeting above mentioned, were men advanced in life, and they all concurred in one opinion respecting the reputed antiquity of those airs which they called Ancient.

They

PREFACE

They smiled on being interrogated respecting the era of such compositions, saying, "They were more ancient than any to which our popular traditions extended.

It would appear that the old Musicians in transmitting this Music to us through so many centuries, treated with the utmost reverence, as they seem never to have ventured to make the slightest innovation in it during [illegible]. This inference we naturally deduce from our finding that Harpers collected from parts far distant from one another, and taught by different masters, always played the same tune in the same key, with the same kind of expression, and without a single variation in any essential passage, or even in any note. The beauty and regularity with which the tunes are constructed, appear surprising. This circumstance seemed the more extraordinary, when it was discovered that the most ancient tunes, were in this respect, the most perfect, admiting of the addition of a Bass with more facility than such as were less ancient. Hence we may conclude, that their Authors must have been excellent performers, versed in the scientific part of their profession, and that they had original a view to the addition of Harmony in the composition of their pieces. It is remarkable that the performers tuned their Instruments on the same principle, totally ignorant of the principle itself, and without being able to assign any reason for their mode of tuning, or of their playing the Bass.

On an impartial review of all these circumstances, we are inclined to believe that those specimens which have survived and been transmited to us, are only the wreck of better times, the history of which is either lost, or incorrectly recognised in a confused series of traditions.

Giraldus Cambrensis, who came over to Ireland in the reign of Henry the Second, gives us a striking account of the state in which he found the Music of this Country. This enlightened Prelate, a native of Britain, and probably not entirely free from the prejudices that were then entertained against the Irish; a man well acquainted with the fine Arts in general, and with Music in particular, as cultivated at that period by the most refined nations of Europe; published an Itinerary, which contains this remarkable passage: "The attention of this people to Musical "Instruments I find worthy of comendation; in which their skill is, beyond all comparison superior to any Nation "have ever seen: for in these the modulation is not slow and solemn, as in the Instruments of Britain, to which we are accustomed; but the sounds are rapid and precipitate, yet at the same time sweet and pleasing. It is wonderful how "in such precipitate rapidity of the fingers the Musical proportions are preserved; and by their art faultless throughout, in the midst of their complicated modulation and most intricate arrangment of notes, by a rapidity so sweet "a regularity so irregular, a concord so discordant, the melody is rendered harmonious and perfect; whether the chords "of the Diatesseron or Diapente, are struck together, yet they always begin in a soft mood, and end in the same, "that all may be perfected in the sweetness of delicious sounds. They enter on, and again leave their modulations "with so much subtilty, and the tinglings of the small strings sport with so much freedom under the deep notes of the Bass, delight with so much delicacy, and sooth so softly that the excellence of their art seems to lie in concealing "it." * But such was the celebrity of Irish Music a century preceding the arrival of Cambrenses that the Welch Bards, so celebrated for their knowledge in this art, condescended to seek for and receive instructions from those of Ireland, of which this passage of Powell, their own historian, in the sixteenth century, is evidence.

"Gruffydh ap Conan" says Powell "brought over with him from Ireland divers cunning Musicians in to Wales "who (he boldly assgrts) devised in a manner all the Instrumental Music, that is now used: as appeareth, as well by "the Books written of the same, as also by the names of the tunes and measures used amongest them to this date". †

This assertion of Powell receives support from the learned Selden: "Their Musique" (says he speaking of the Welsh) "for the most part came out of Ireland, with Gruffydh ap Conan, Prince of North Wales, about King "Stephen's time." ‡ Cardoc a Welshman also in the twelfth century, without any of that illiberal partiality so common with National writers assures us that the Irish devised all the Instruments Tunes and Measures in use among the Welsh.

The Bards, according to the testemony of Strabo, Diodorus and Ammianus Marcellinus, existed among the ruder branches of the Celtic tribes before the time of Augustus.

* Translation from Topog. Hib. Distinct. 3. c. 11. † Hist. of Camb. p. 191. Edit. 1584. ‡ Notes on Dray. We

PREFACE

We find them under the same name in Ireland from the earliest period in history down to the year 1738 when Carolan died — who seems to have been born to render the termination of his order memorable and brilliant. If we reflect upon the disadvantages under which he laboured; born blind — with slender opportunities of acquiring ideas the inhabitant of a country recently desolated by a civil war, the flames of which had scarcely subsided, and add to this, his own propensity to Idleness and dissipation, we cannot but be astonished at the prodigious powers of his mind; He has occasionally tried almost every stile of Music; the elegiac, the festive, the amorous, and sacred; and has so much excelled in each, that we scarcely know to which of them his genius was best adapted. his first composition was amorous and plaintive, called "Bridget Cruise," addressed to a Lady, to whom he was tenderly attached, without the hope of success. He is said to have dedicated Fifteen pieces to her, none of which are contained in this collection. The first was either originally imperfect, or the copy procured of it so corrupt that a Bass could not be adapted to it. His last tune was inscribed to his Physician Dr. Staford. He composed, the Fairy Queen, Rose Dillon, and others of his serious pieces, early in life; but after having established a reputation, and addicted himself too much to festive company and the bottle, he dedicated his time to the compositions of his Planxties, which required no labour or assiduity. We may form some idea of the fertility of his genius from this circumstance, that one harper who attended the Belfast meeting, and who had never seen him, or was not taught directly by any person, that had copyed from him, had acquired upwards of an hundred of his tunes, which he said constituted but a very inconsiderable, part of the real number. As Carolan never taught any itinerant pupils, except his own Son (who had no musical genius) and as we have never heard that any of his pieces were committed to writing until several years after his death, when young Carolan, under the patronage of Dr. Delany, edited a small Volume, we need not wonder if nine tenths of the whole be irreparably lost. In Carolan's Concerto (N.° 42) — and in his Madam Cole (N.° 16) the practitioner will perceive evident imitations of Correlli, in which the exuberant fancy of that admired composer is happily copied. In the ancient air, Gradh gan fios, or Love in Secret, (N.° 14) he will be charmed with one of the most pleasing strains that any country has produced; it is accordingly so old that no trace could be discovered of the century in which it was produced. The words of Coolin were extant in the reign of Henry the VIII. a very modern period when compared with that in which the air was composed. Scarfaint na Gompanach, or the, Parting of Friends, (N.° 25) is considered as very ancient. It is often played by Harpers when the audience are about to depart, and it is a popular opinion that it was composed while the Irish groaned under the oppression of the Danes, and were forced to conceal themselves in caverns and sequestered places. The tune called, Thugamar fein a Sambra Gallin. (N.° 51) is probably extremely ancient. It was sung by the band of Virgins that went out of Dublin to welcome the Duke of Ormond when he landed in Ireland. The ancient air, Ta an samradh teacht: or the, Summer is coming, (N.° 7) is used upon the opening of Summer in different parts of the kingdom. Strange as this may appear, this proves to be the same Song, both as to Poetry and Music, which Dr. Burney has puplished & written so voluminous a critique upon, as the first piece of Music ever set to score in great Britian. The extreme improbability of its being borrowed by the ancient Irish, from a country that has no national Music of its own (the Welsh excepted) is sufficiently evident. The devoted attachment to their own Music, and the praises it received from other countries; their ignorance of the English language, and their rooted aversion to their invaders, were effectual bars to any such plagiarism or adoption. The air of, Ad croigreac ma bin tu, or If to a Foreign clime you go, (N.° 1.) procured in the county of Mayo we have reason to believe the oldest extant. It was sung by only one person who was of great age, and although numbers were present, few knew it even by name, but all appeared greatly delighted with the composition.

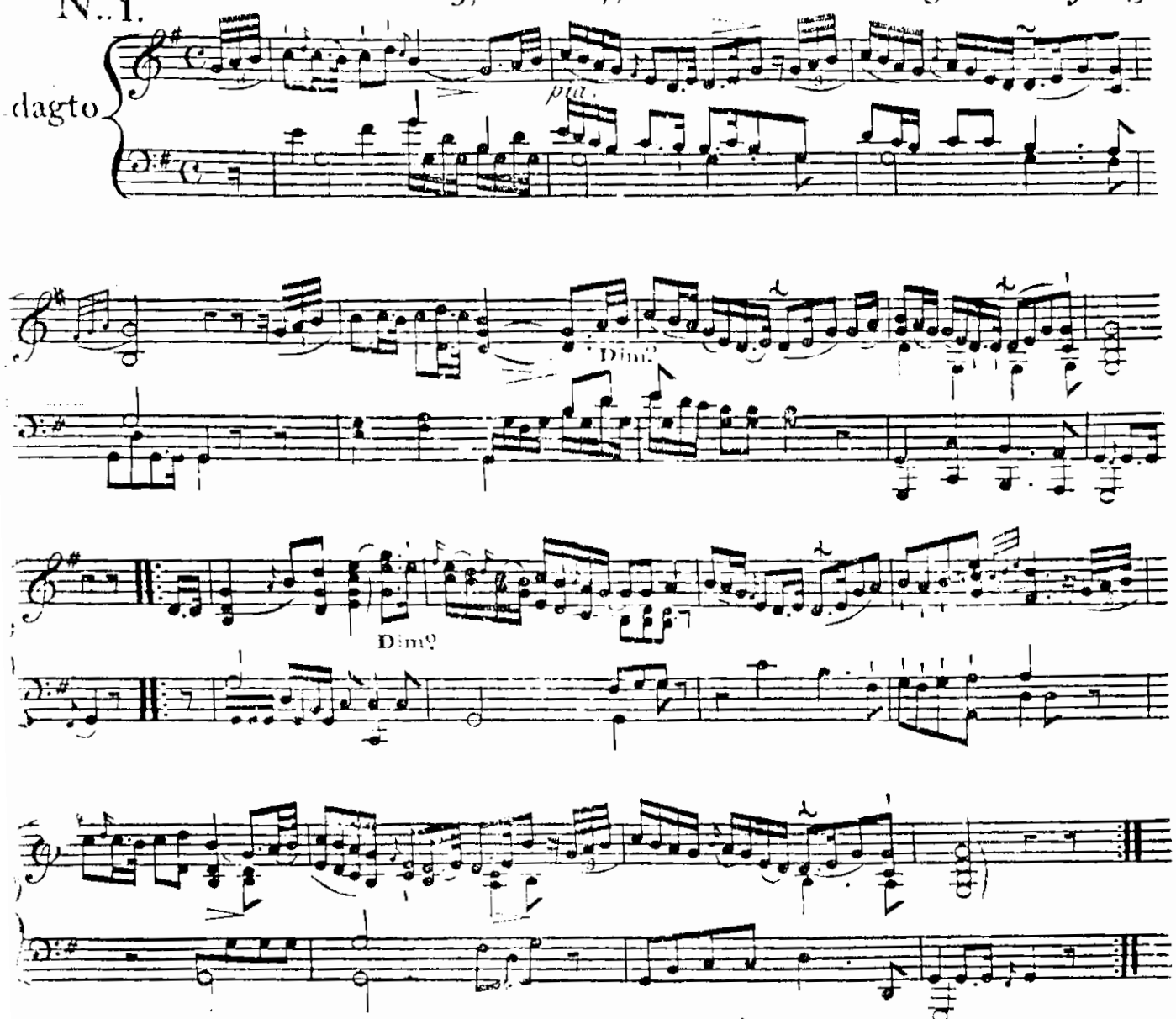
To enumerate all those airs, that address themselves to the heart, and harmonize, with the finest feelings of our nature, would extend the bounds of this Preface to an unwarrantable length. It is to be remarked however, that several of the airs in the following Collection were not taken from Irish Harpers, but from Songsters; and therefore as they now stand, are not always adapted to that Instrument. We cannot conclude without seriously urging gentlemen in the southern parts of Ireland, to follow the example of the Belfast Society, by promoting similar meetings of the Harpers in their respective Provinces. The veneration in which the Music of Ireland, with every vestige of Irish antiquity, has been held by our ancestors, and the respect it has received for so many centuries from foreign nations, seem well calculated to excite corresponding feelings in their descendants. Shall we suffer them to perish in our hands at the close of perhaps the last century in which a single new ray of light can be struck out amidst the gloom, with which time envelops the earliest and often the most interesting of its works; In paying them all due attention, we do not merely gratify the natural feeling of national pride; we are tracing the progress of the human mind, and endeavouring to restore a page in the history of man.

FINIS.

No. 1.

Ad ecoizpes m s hm tr

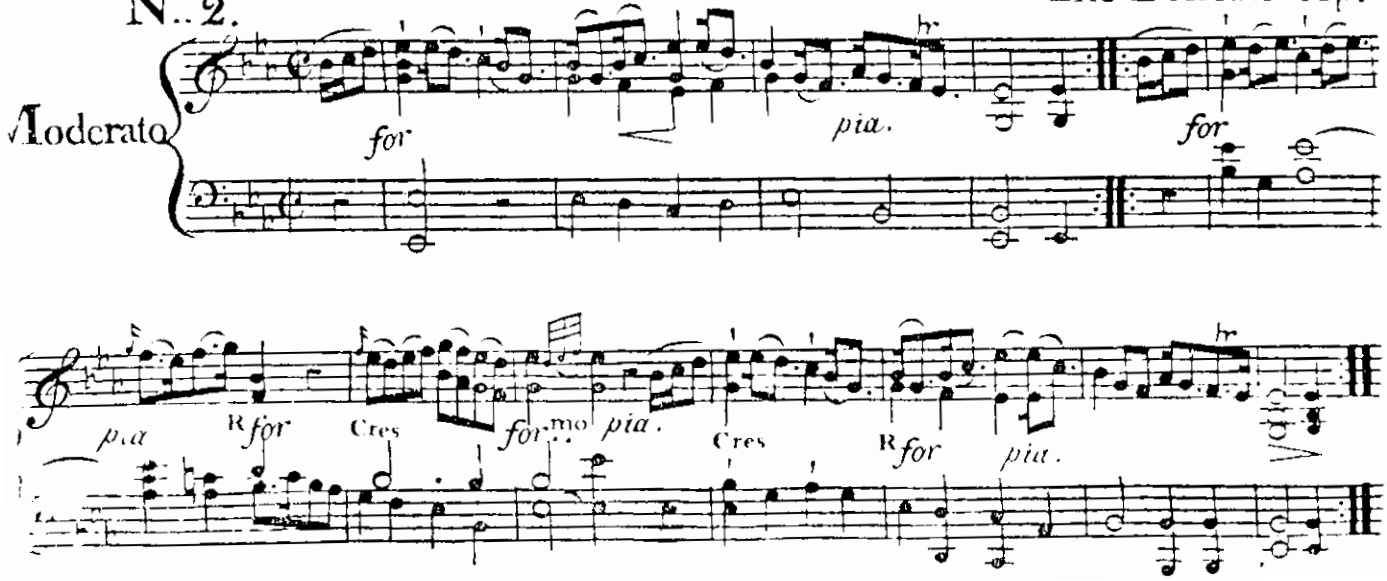
If to a Foreign Clime you go



No. 2.

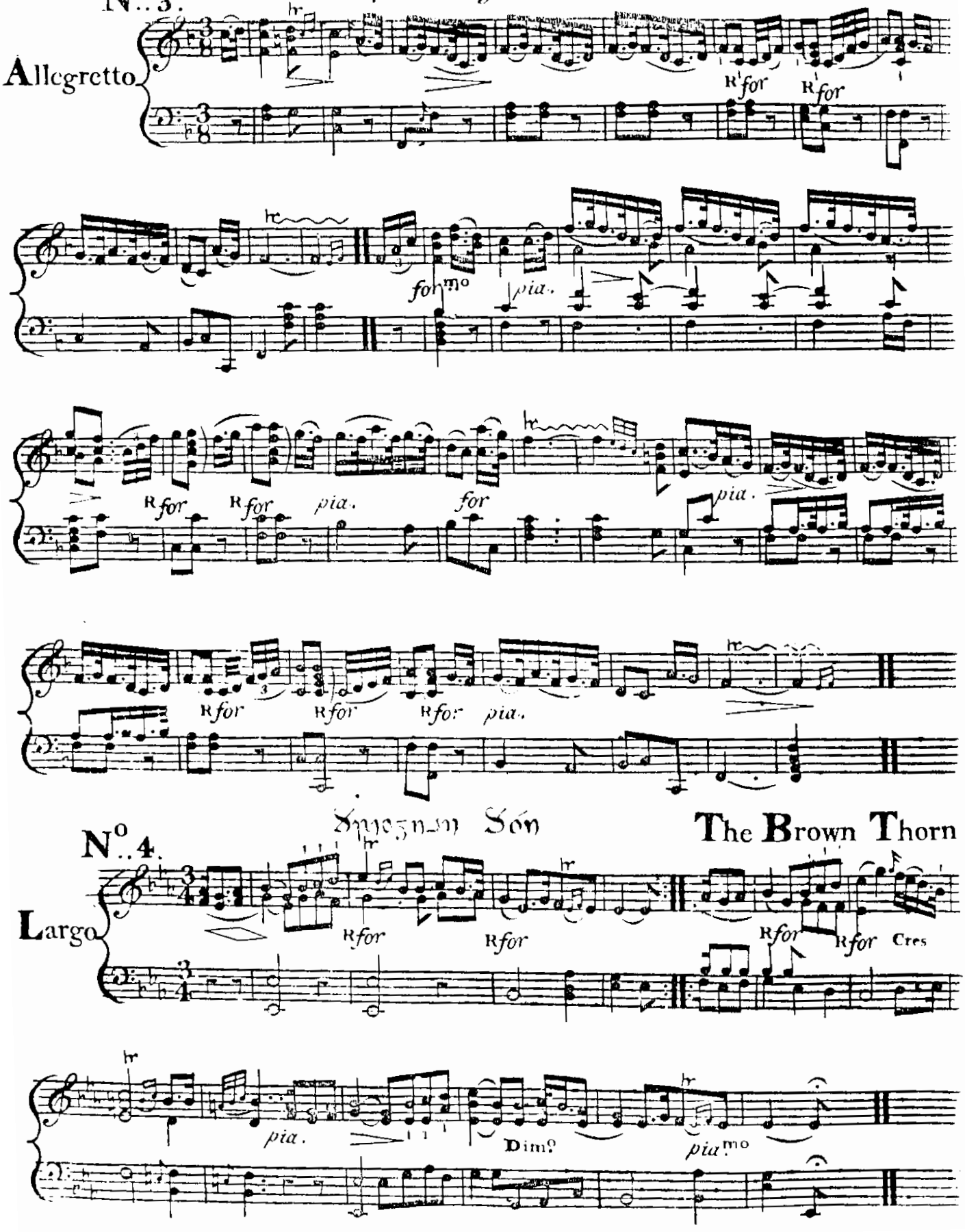
Colls 8h sn tyfonns 18h

The Foxes Sleep.



N°. 3. Joice's Tune.

Allegretto



N°. 4. The Brown Thorn

Largo

N°. 5. Fairy Queen.

CAROLA?

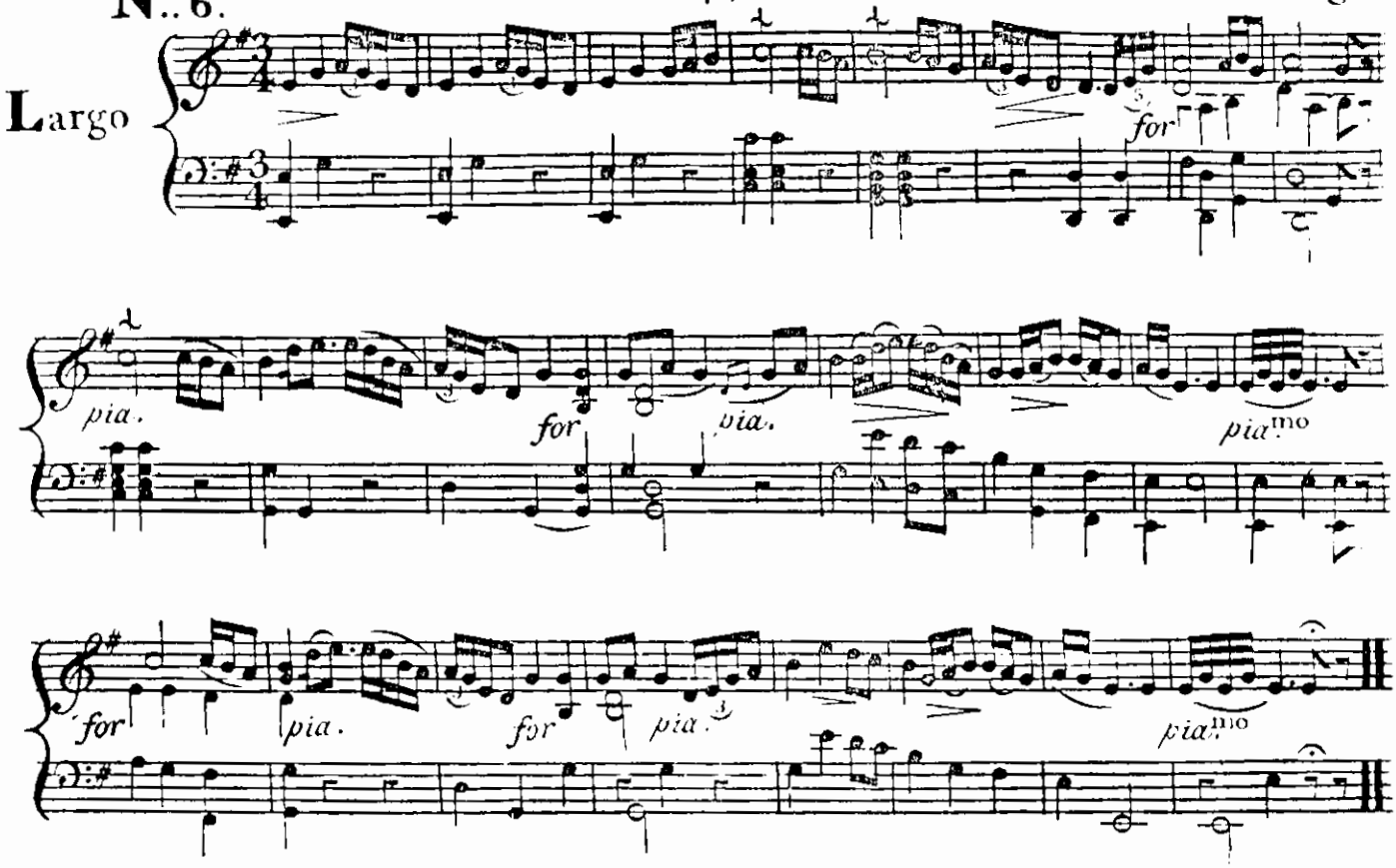
No. 6. Girls Have You Seen George.

Largo

for

pia. for pia. pia.mo

for pia. for pia. pia.mo



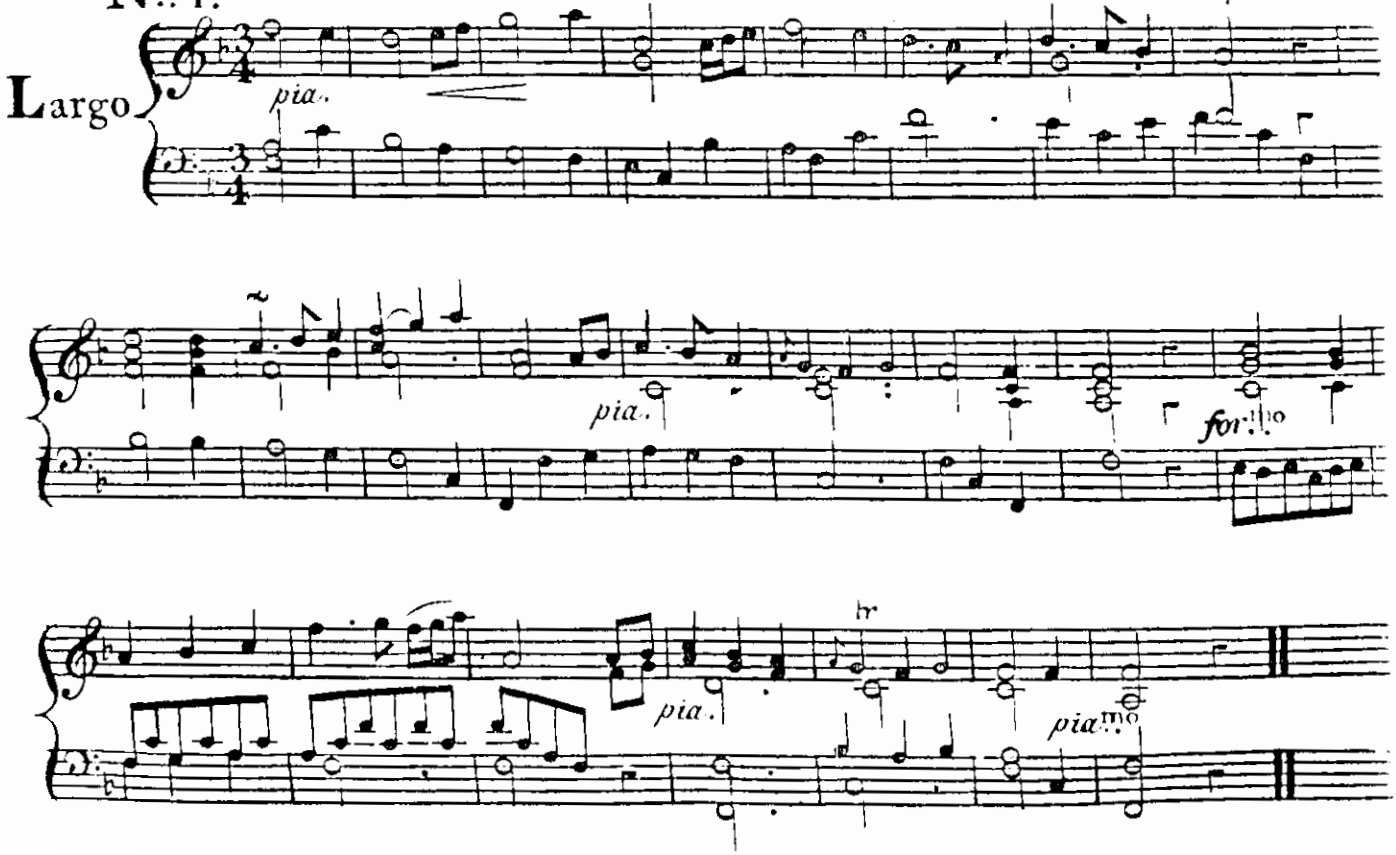
No. 7. The Summer is Coming.

Largo

pia.

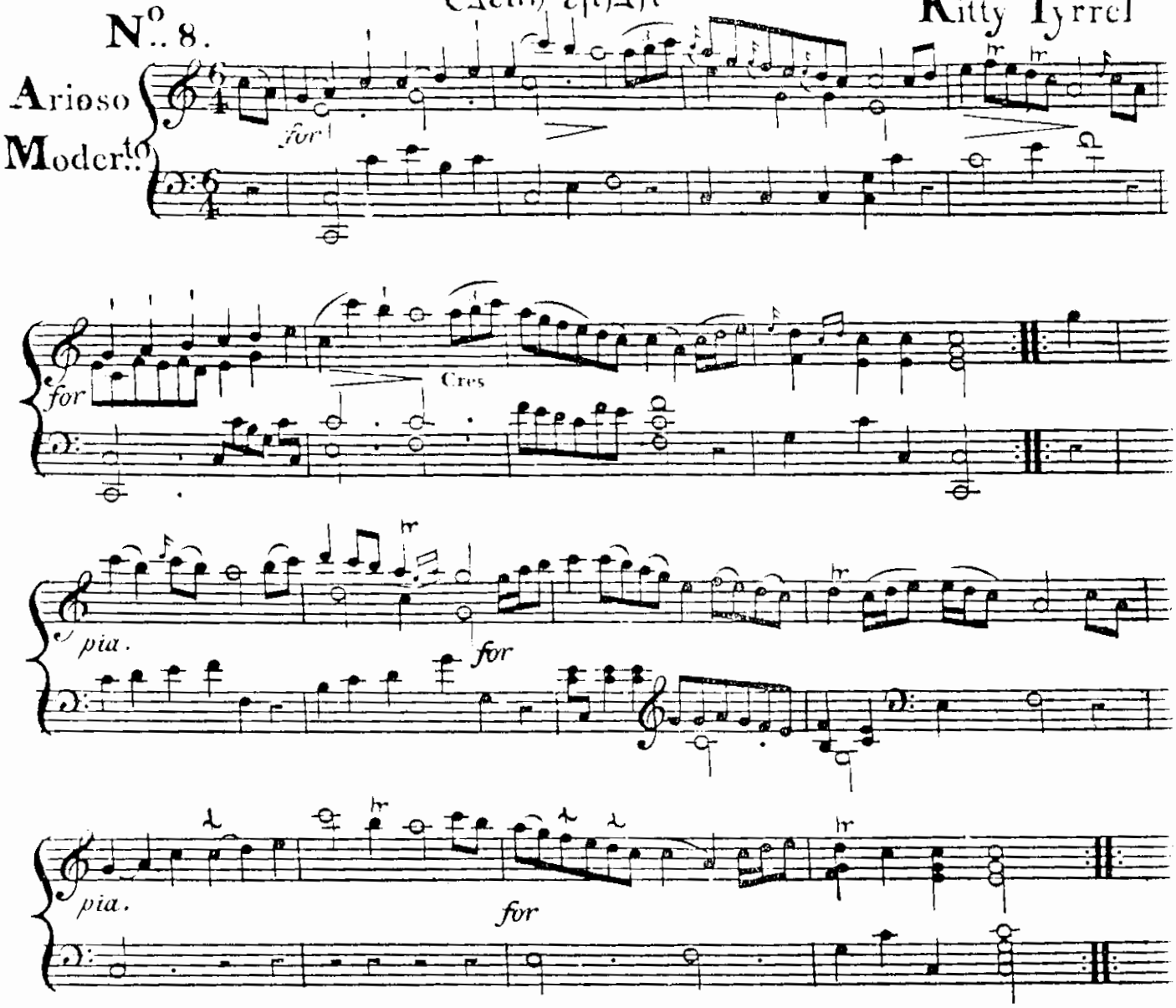
pia. for.mo

pia. pia.mo



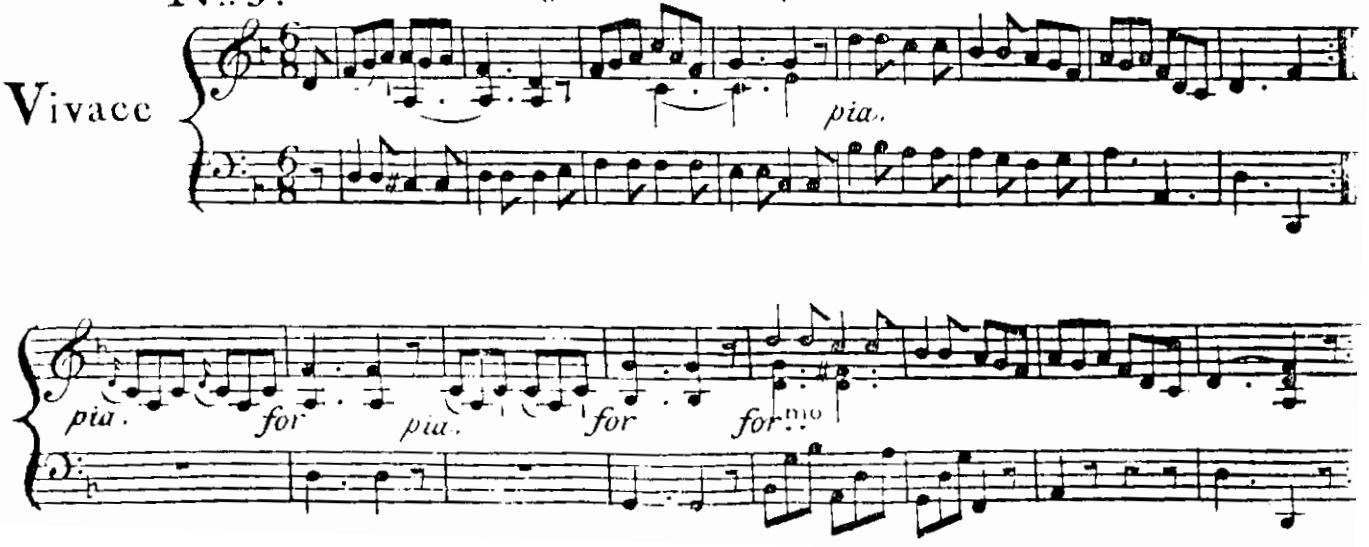
N°. 8. Kitty Tyrrel

Arioso Moder.to



N°. 9. The Beardless B

Vivace



No. 10. Planxty Drury.

CAROLAN

Allegro

dim

No. 11. Old Truagh.

Very Slow

sf sf sf sf p

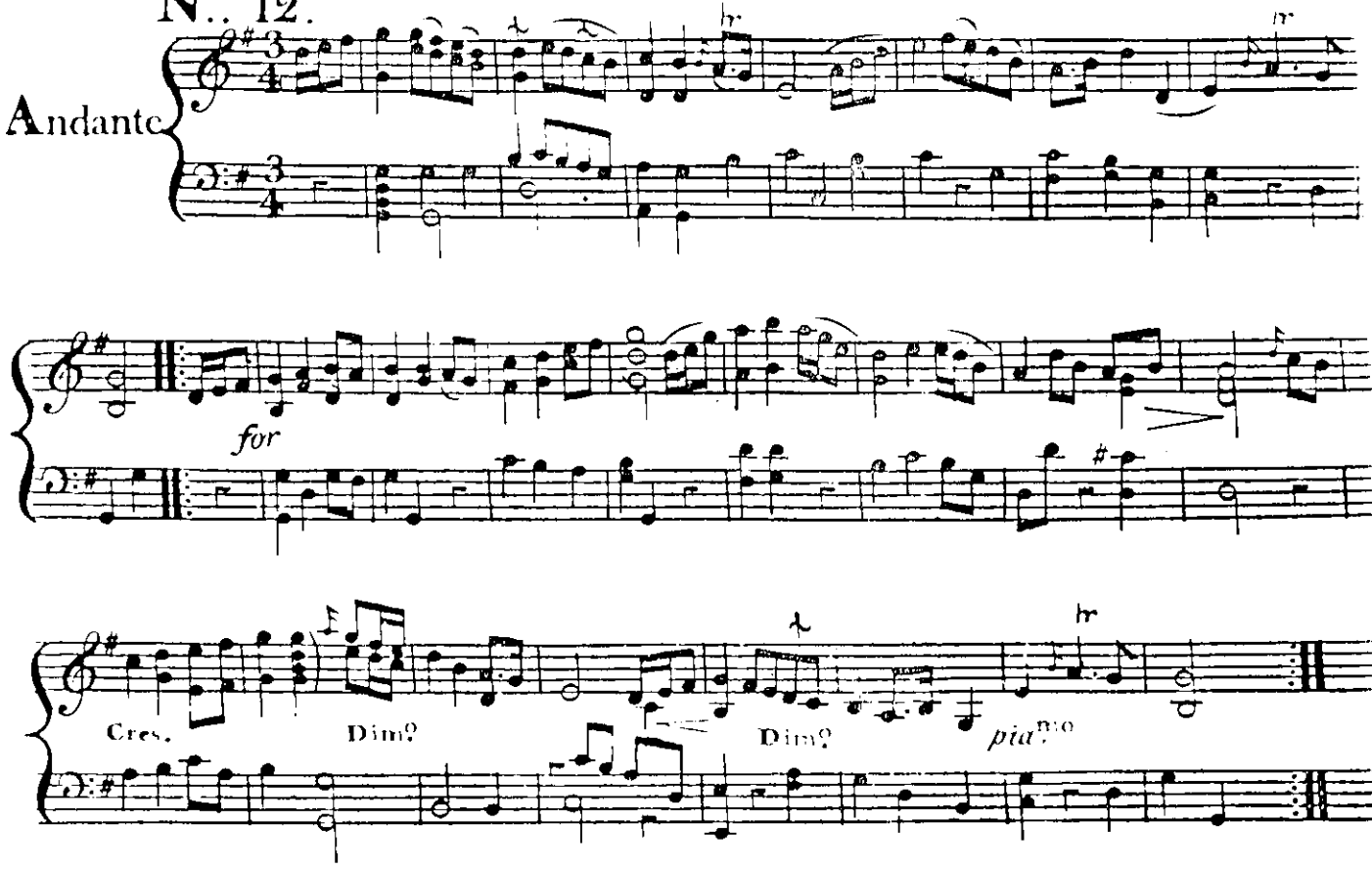
cres sf f

Molly St. George.

CONOLAN

N.o 12.

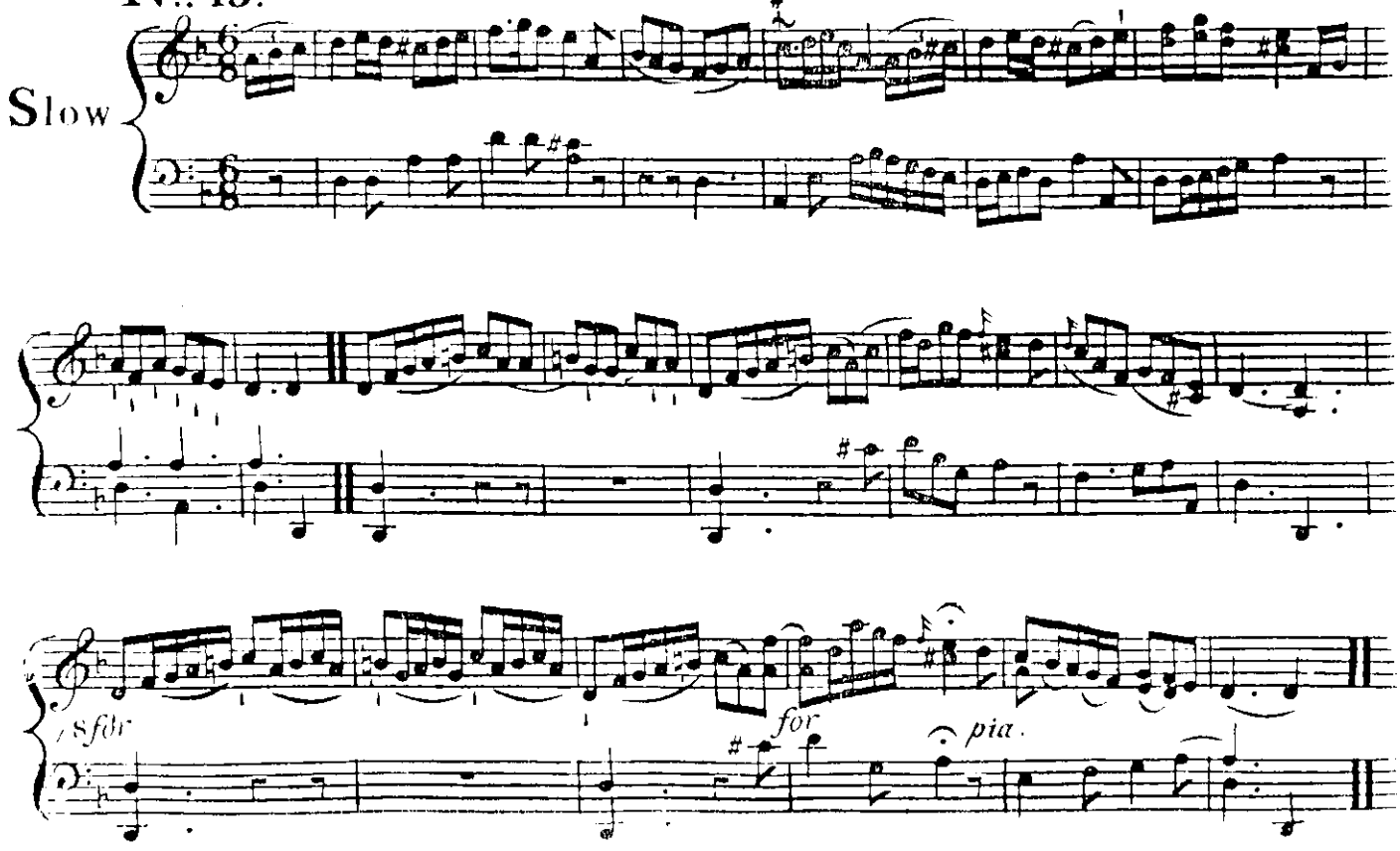
Andante



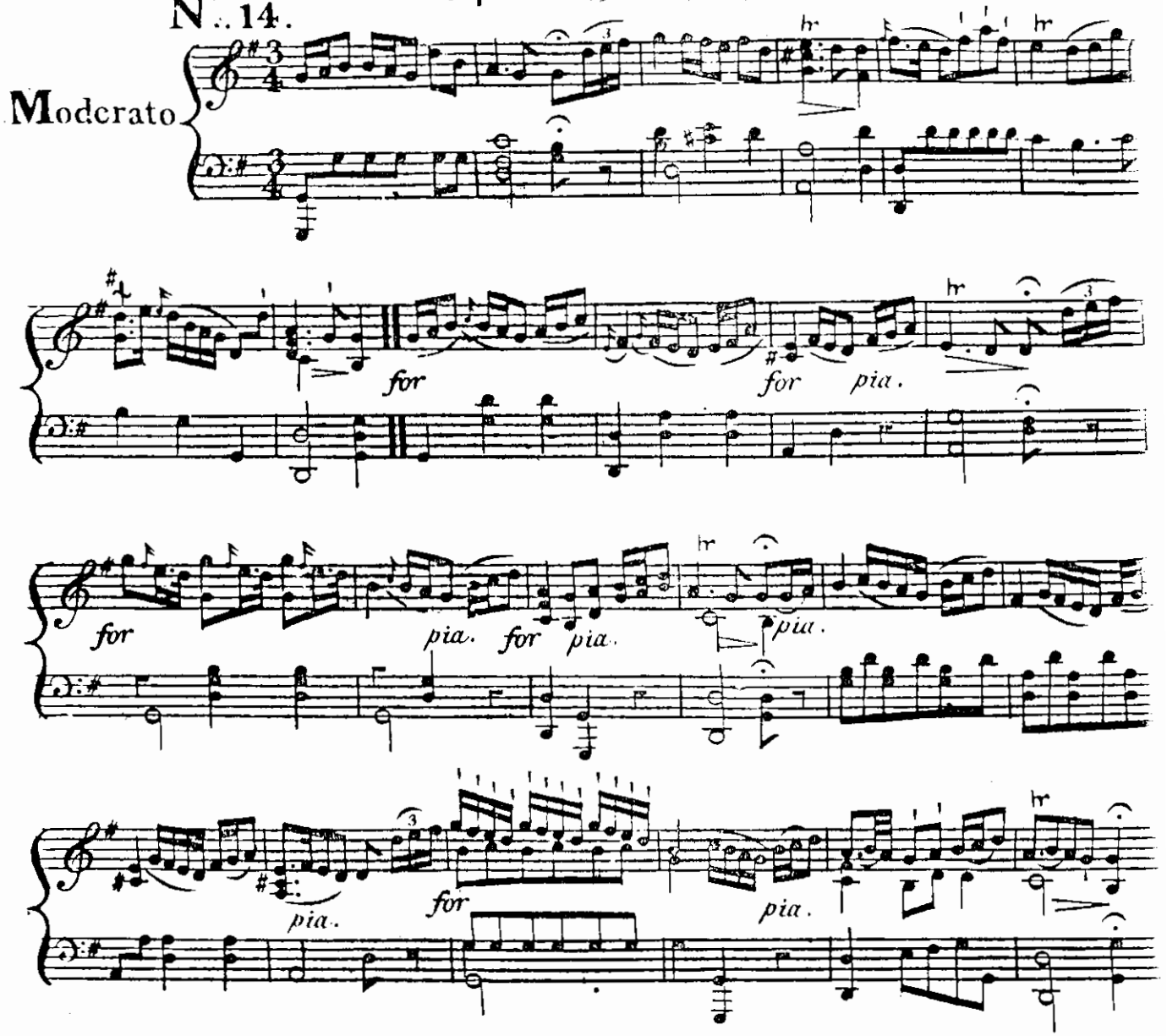
The Fair-haired Girl.

N.o 13.

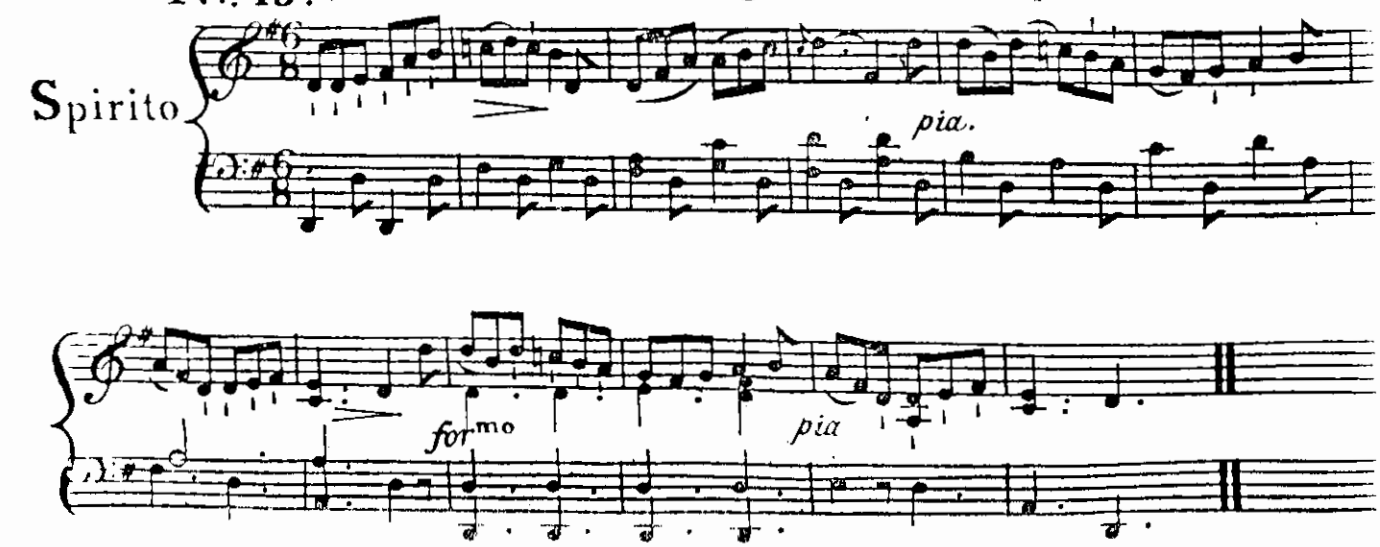
Slow



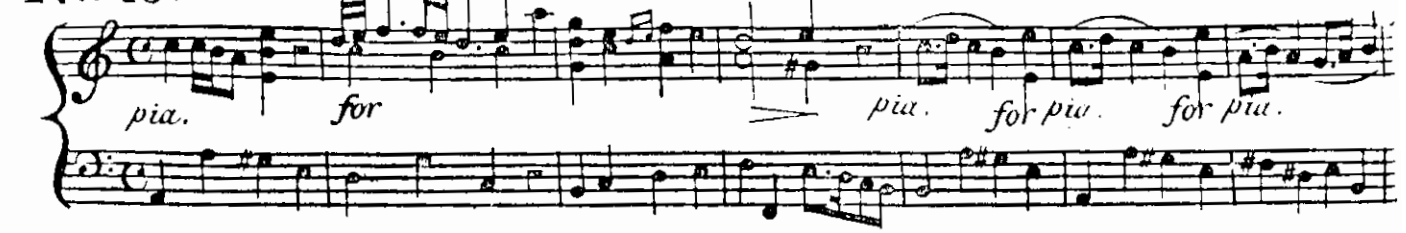
N°. 14. Love in Secret.

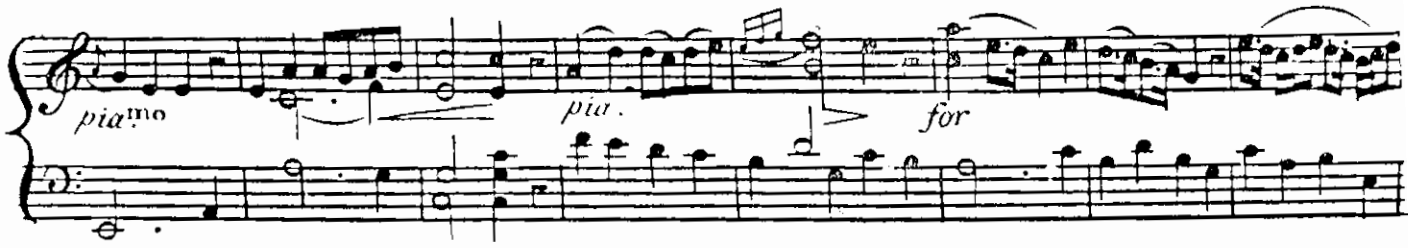


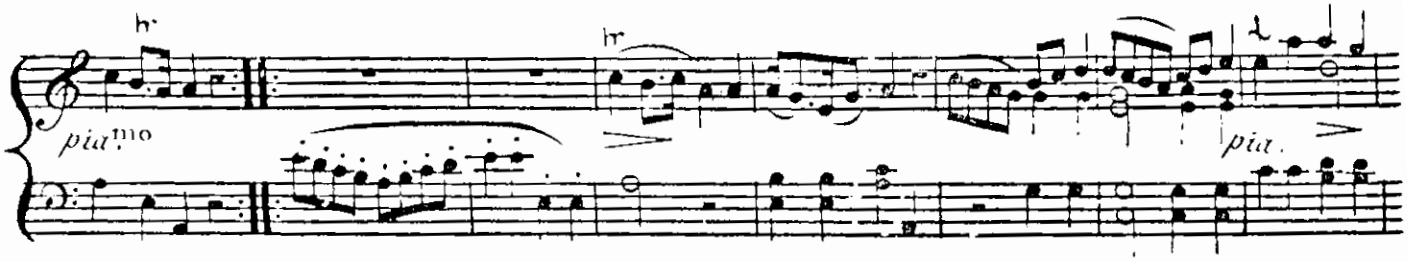
N°. 15. O Open the Door Soft

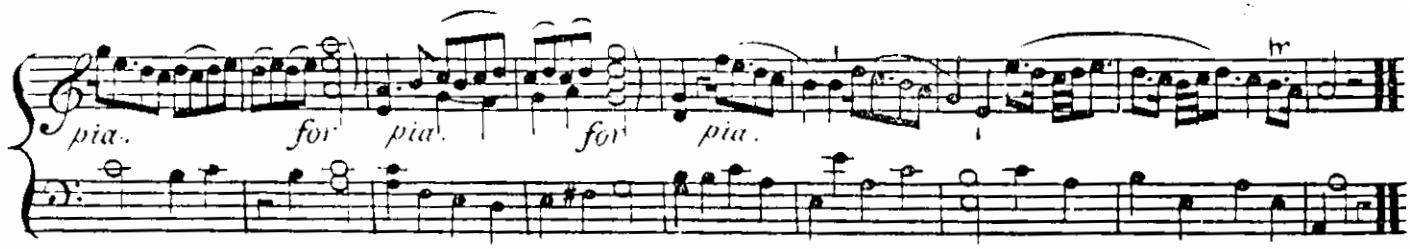


N°. 16. Madam Cole.

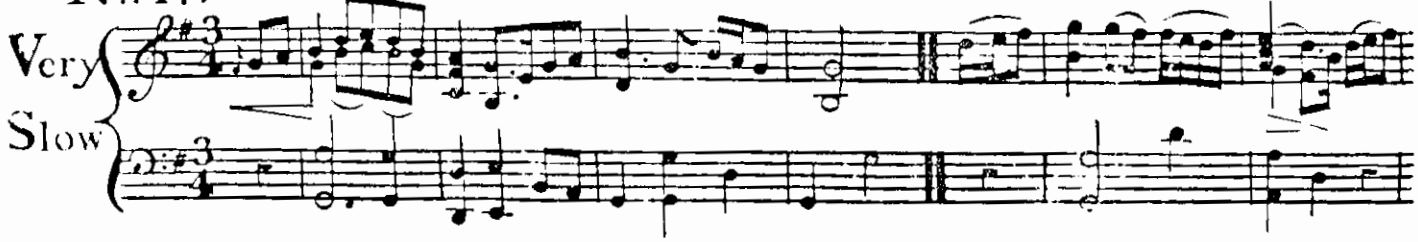


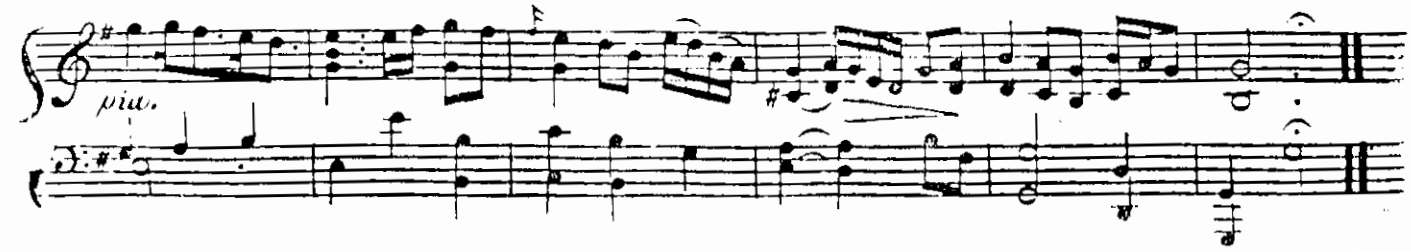






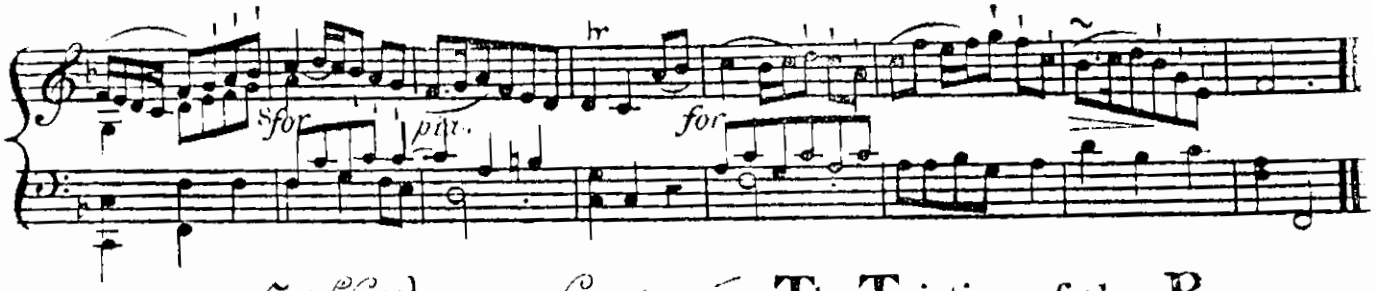
N°. 17. The Young Man's Dream.





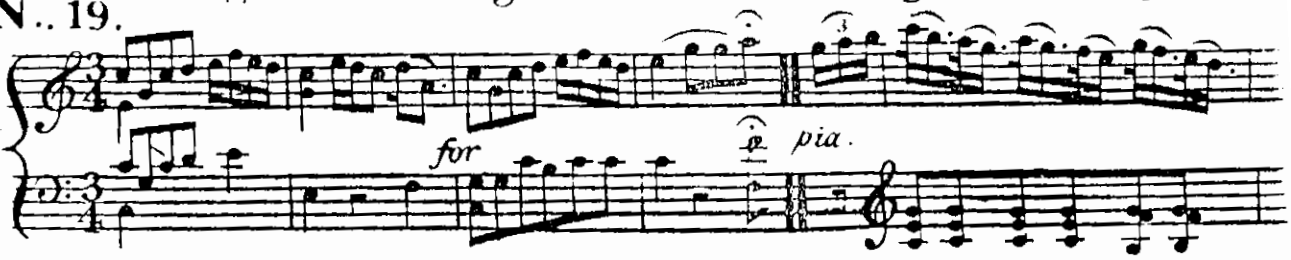
No. 18. The Charmer with the Fair Locks

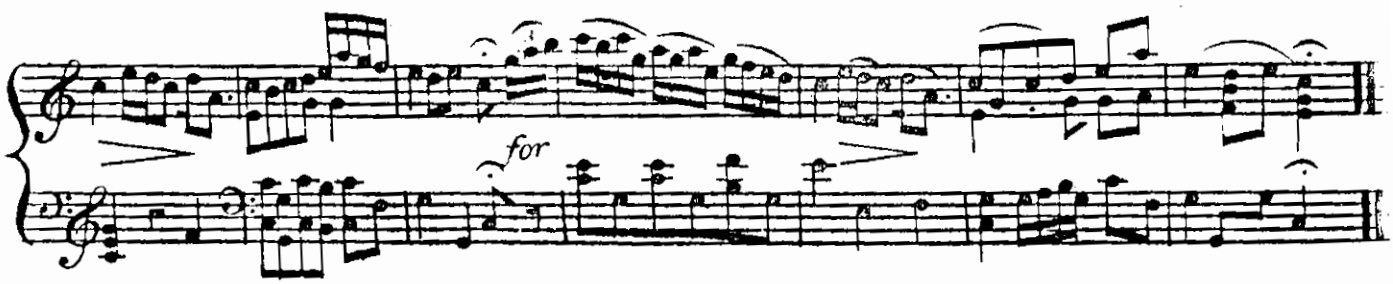
Maestoso



No. 19. The Twisting of the Rope.

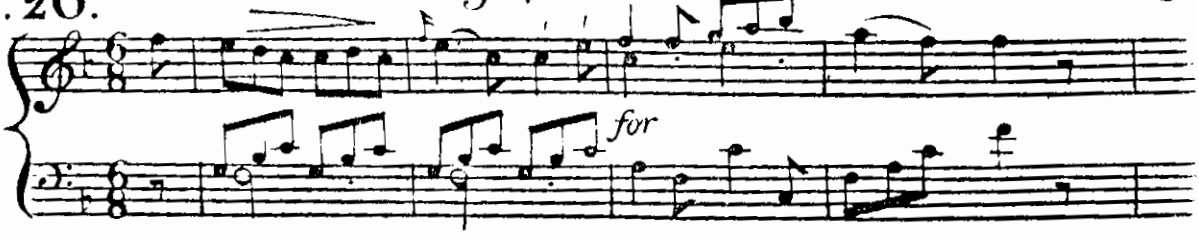
Slow

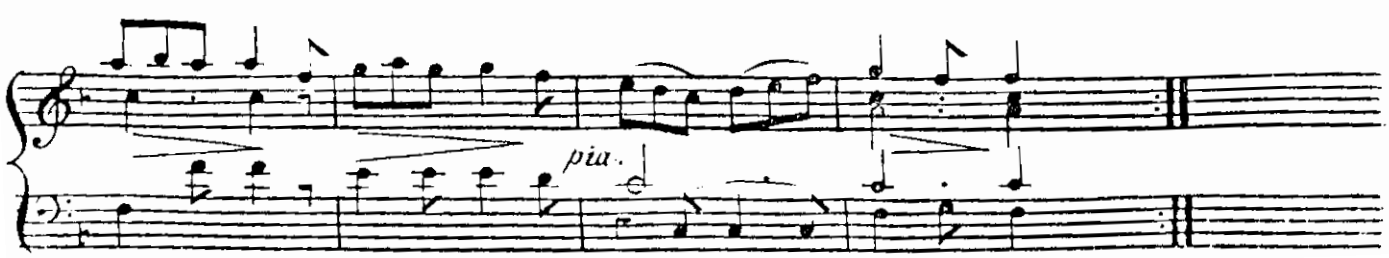


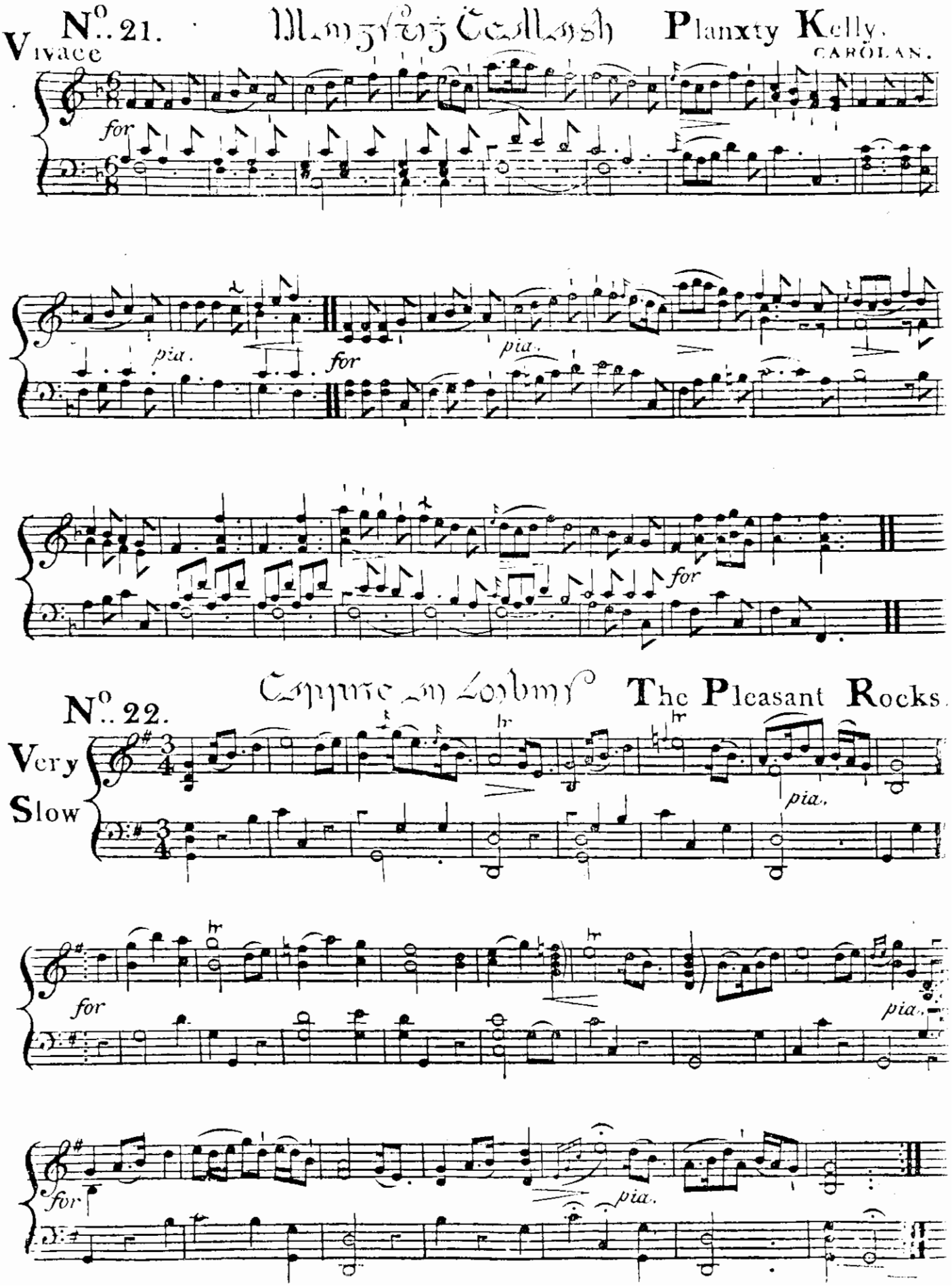


No. 20. Dennis don't be Threat'ning.

Allegro

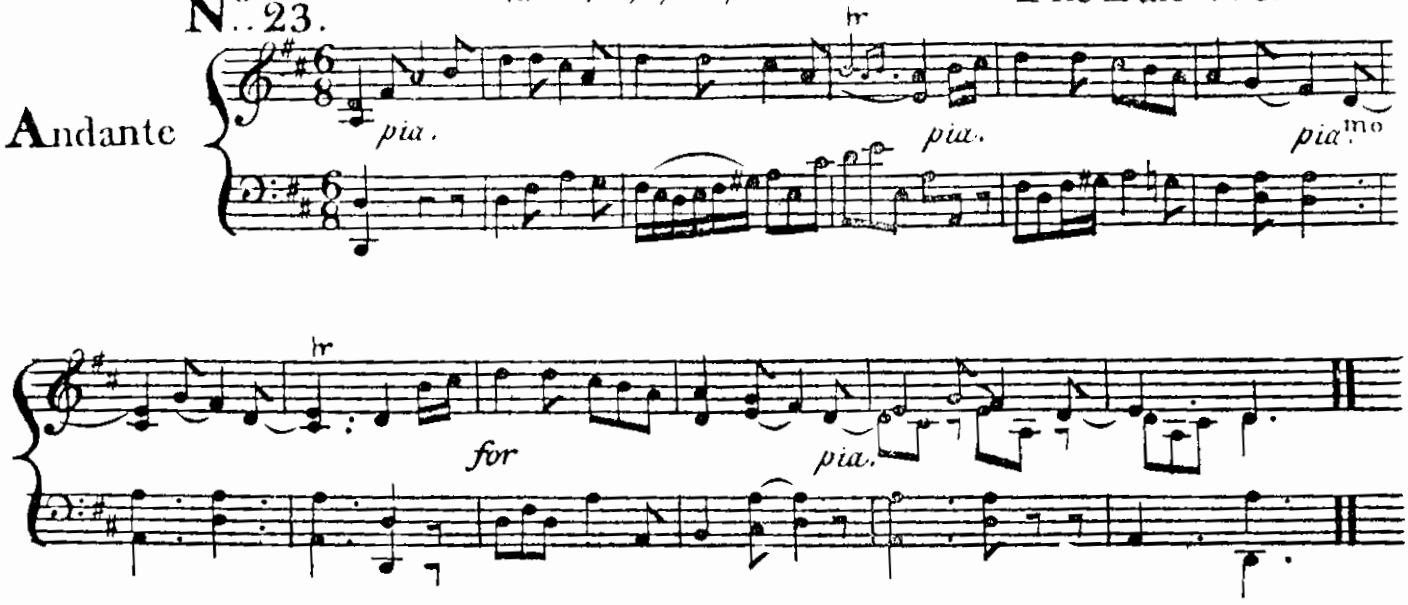





No. 21.
Vivace
Planxty Kelly.
CAROLAN.
for
pia.
for
pia.
for
No. 22.
The Pleasant Rocks.
Very Slow
pia.
for
pia.
for
pia.

N°. 23. Ben Bhan — The Fair Woman.

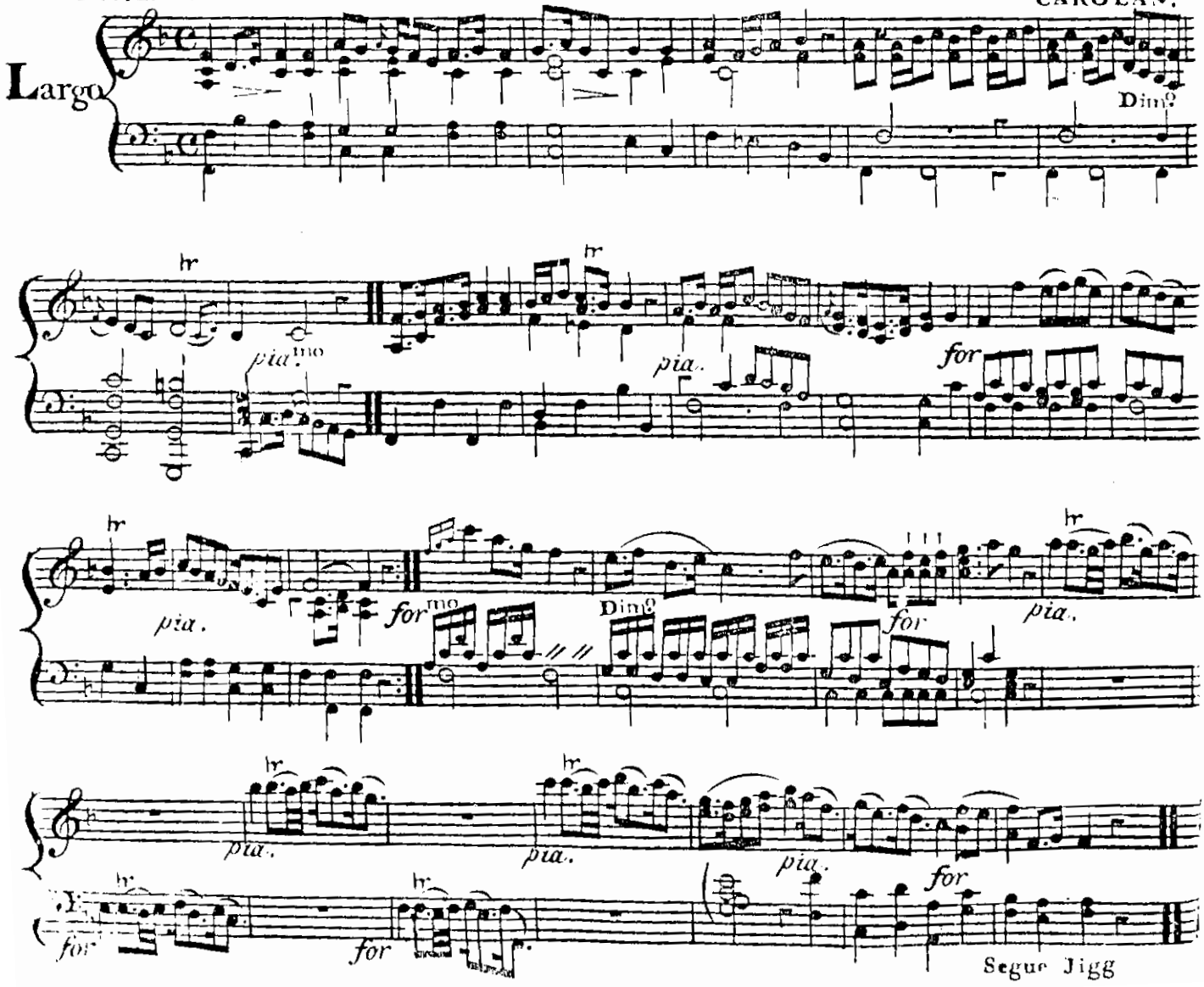
Andante



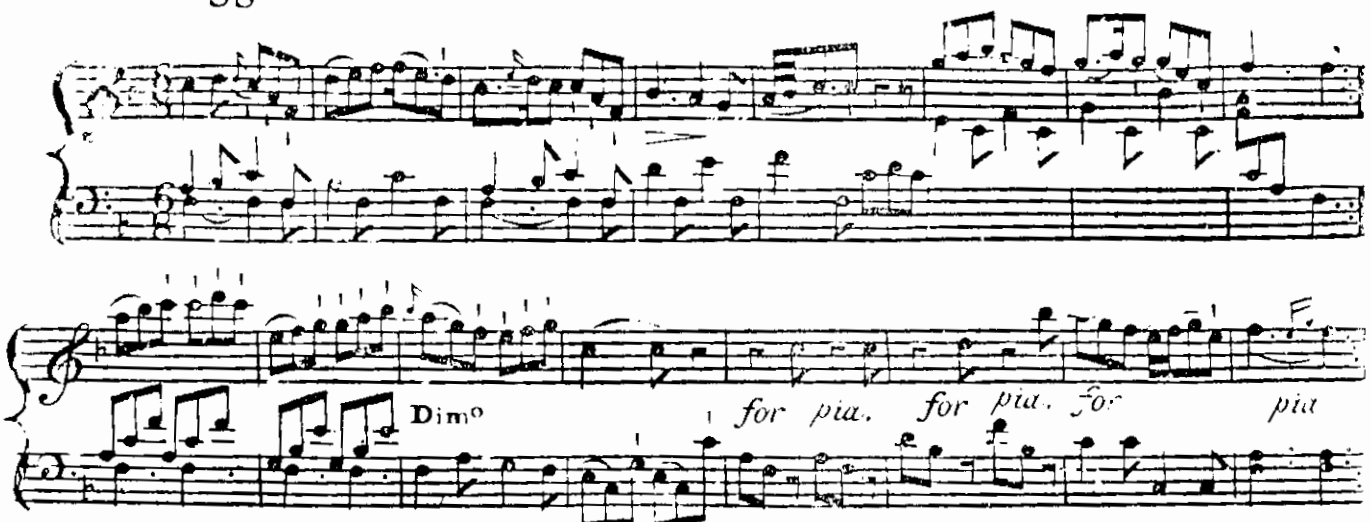
N°. 24. Row Sillorn — Rose Dillon.

CAROLAN.

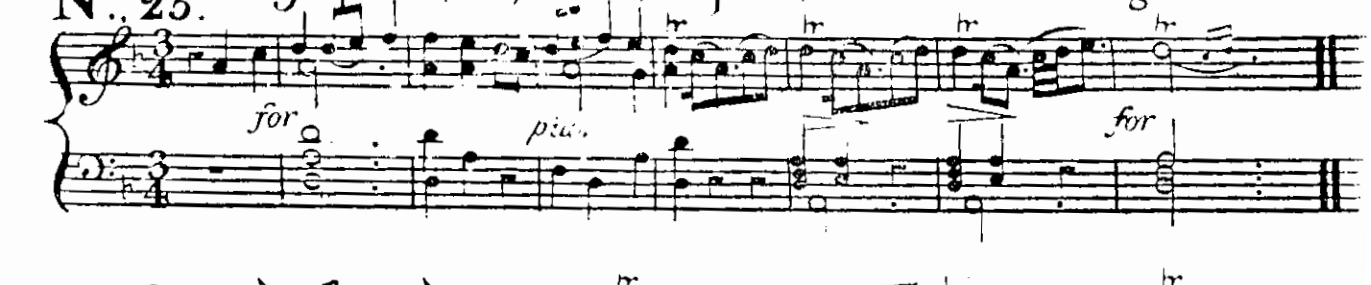
Largo

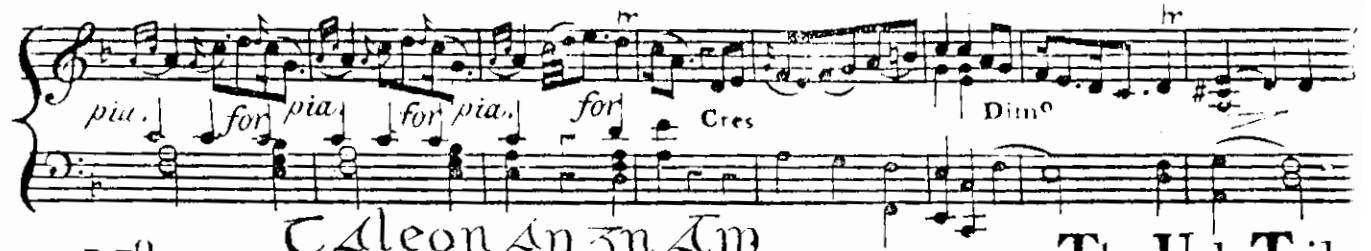


Jigg.

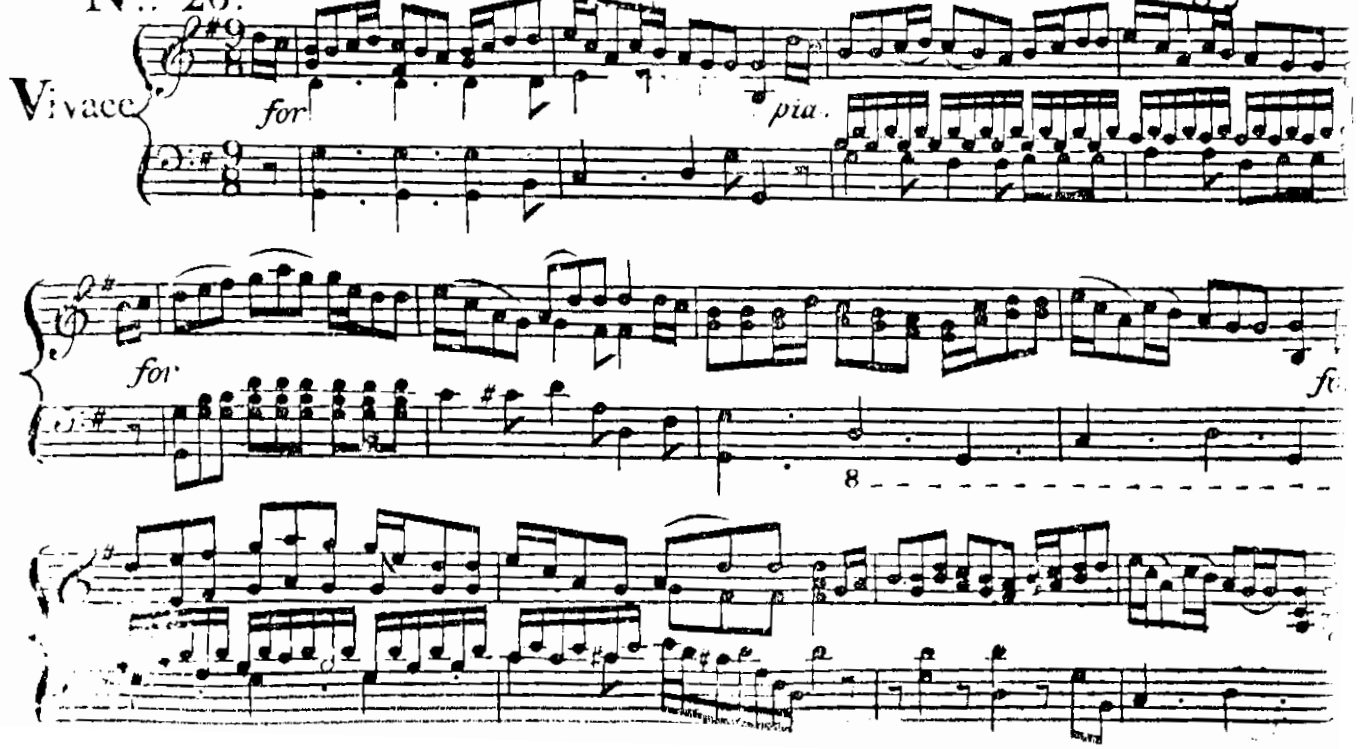


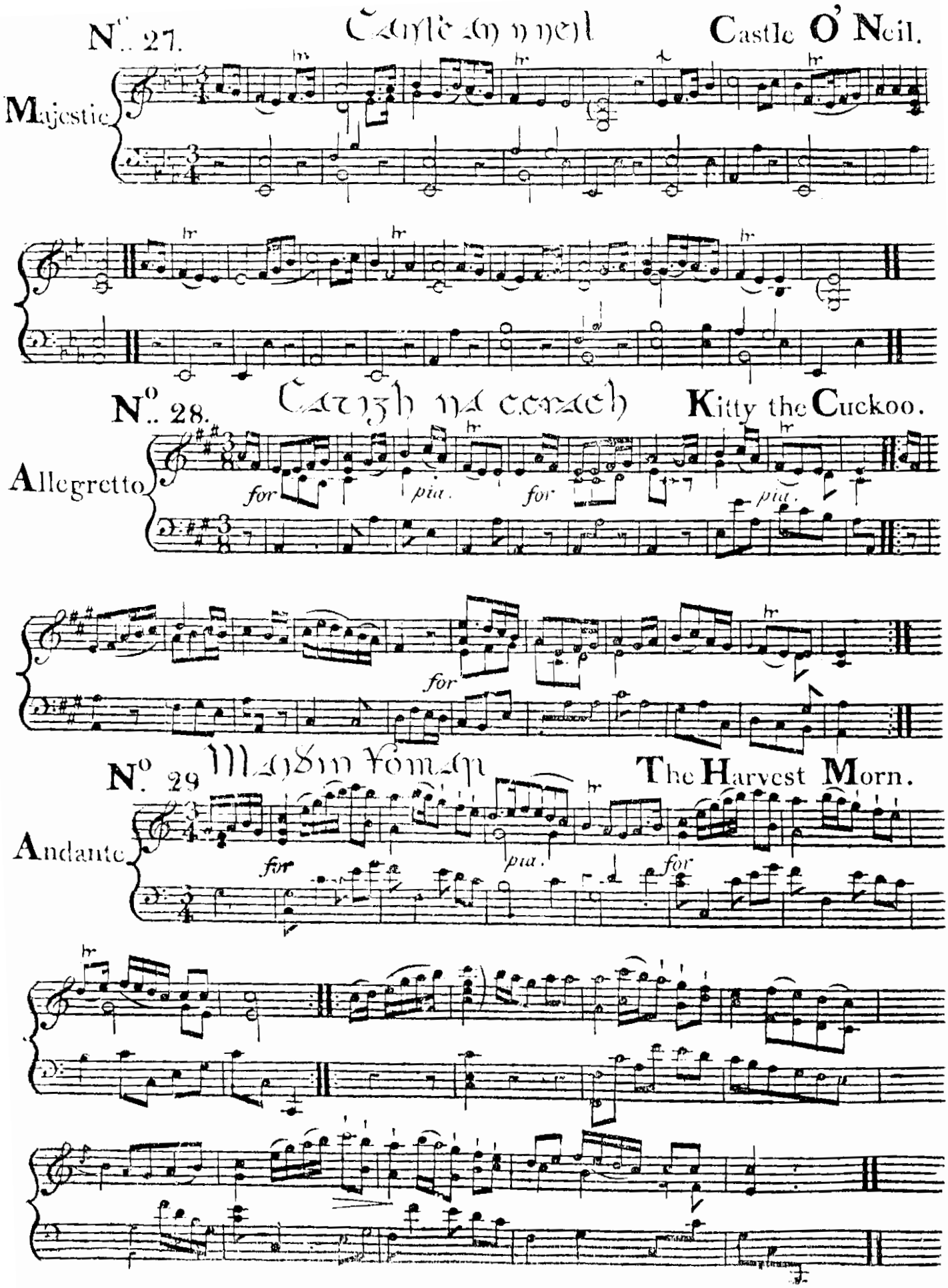
N°. 25. The Parting of Friends

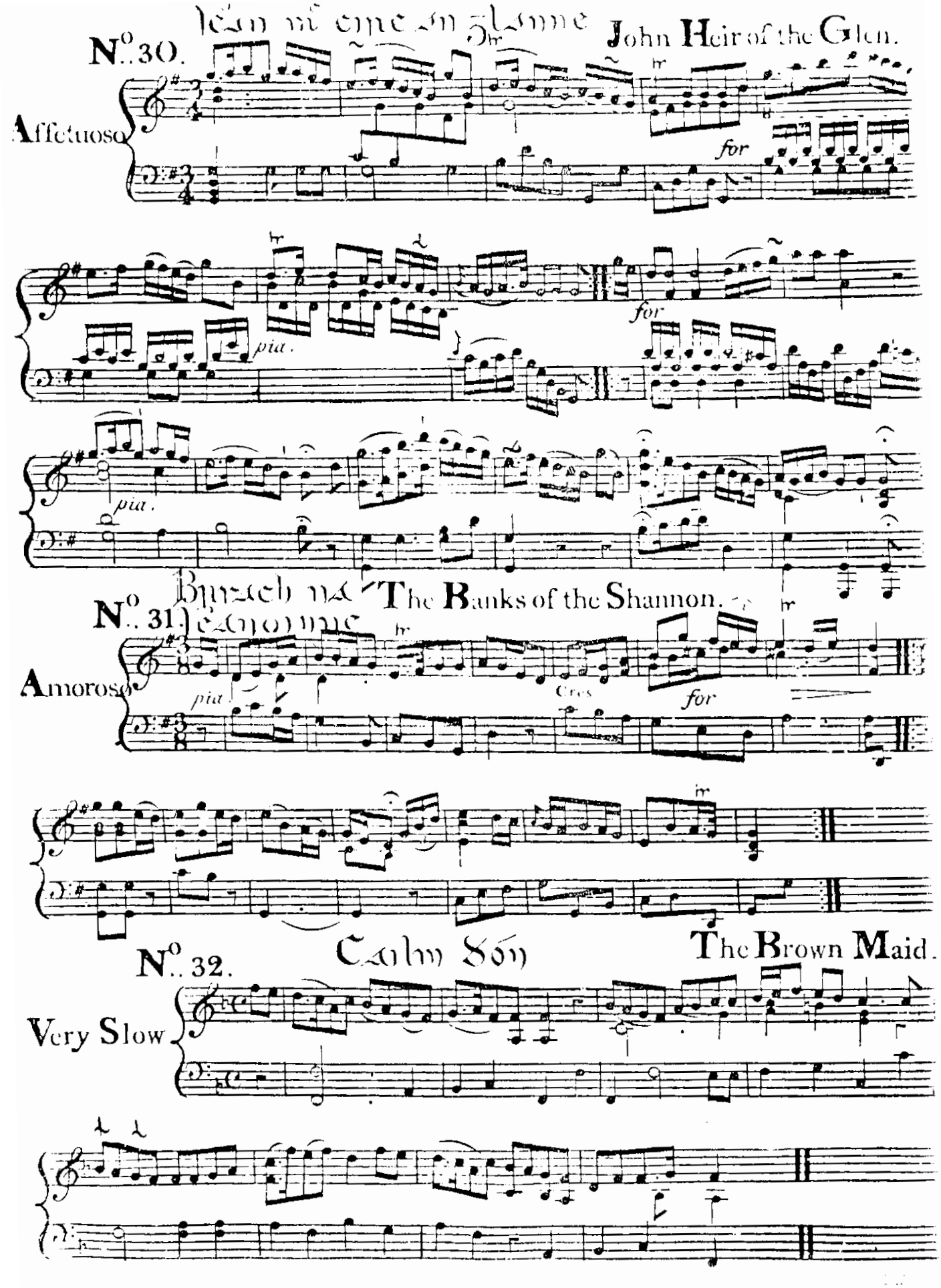




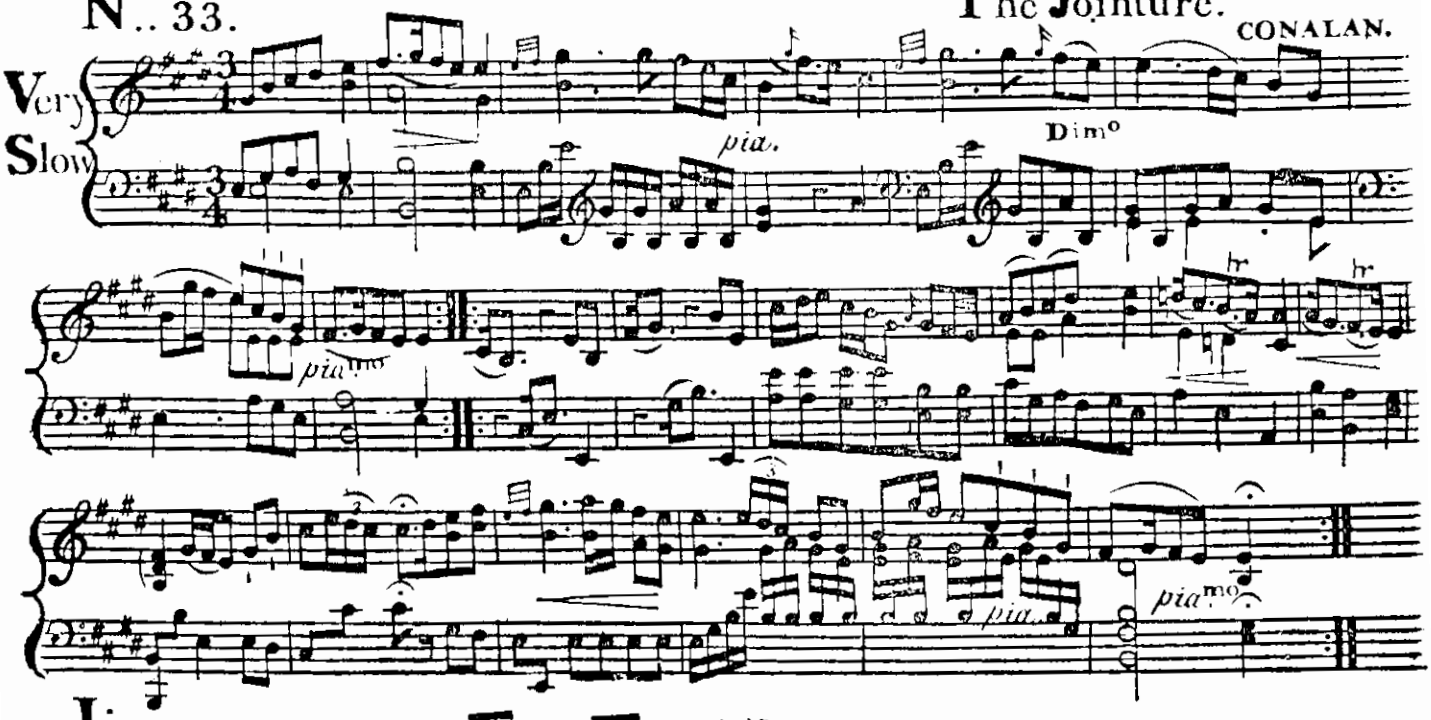
N°. 26. The Ugly Tailo

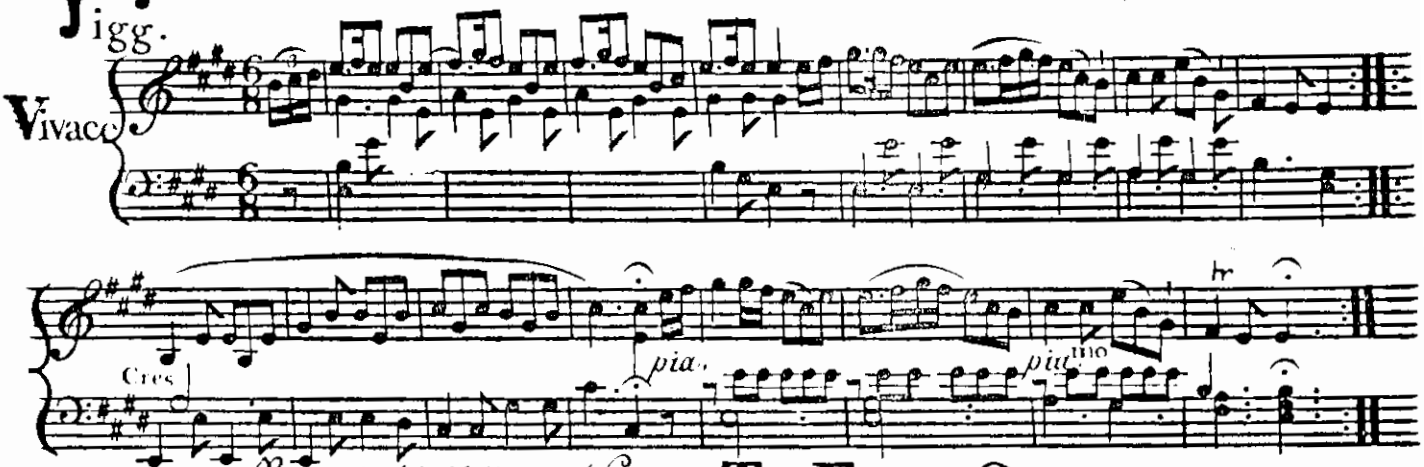



N°. 27.
Castle O' Neil.
Majestic
N°. 28.
Kitty the Cuckoo.
Allegretto
for
pia.
for
pia.
for
N°. 29
The Harvest Morn.
Andante
for
pia.
for

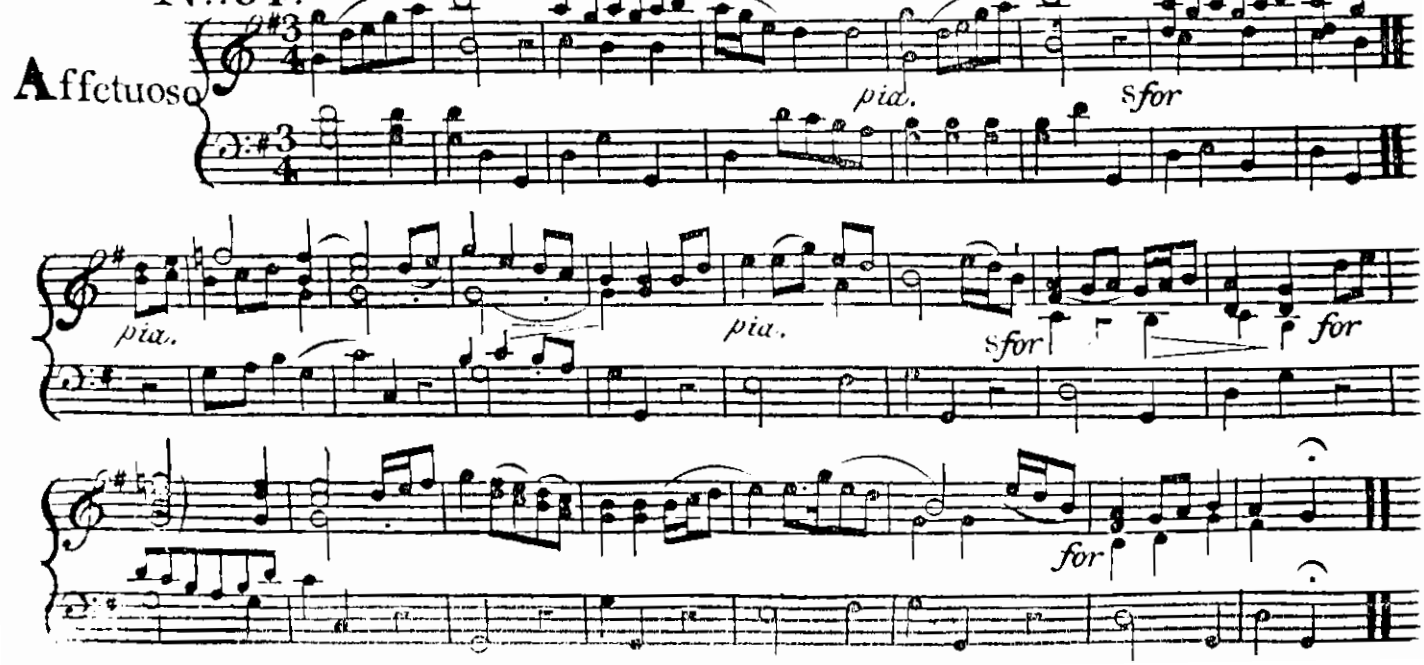

N°. 30.
John Heir of the Glen.
Affetuoso
for
pia.
for
pia.
N°. 31.
The Banks of the Shannon.
Amoroso
pia.
Cres
for
N°. 32.
The Brown Maid.
Very Slow

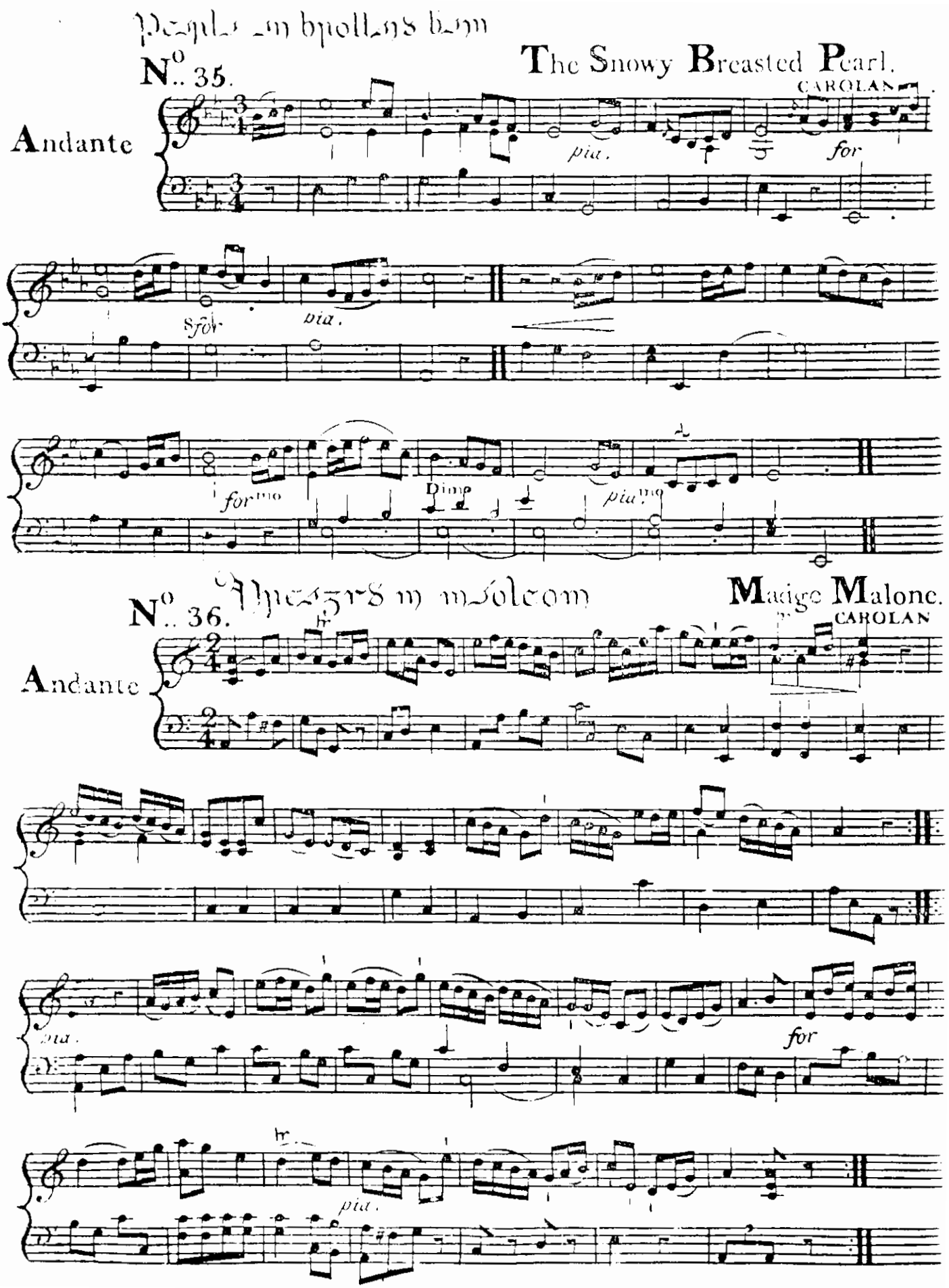
N°. 33. **The Jointure.** CONALAN.





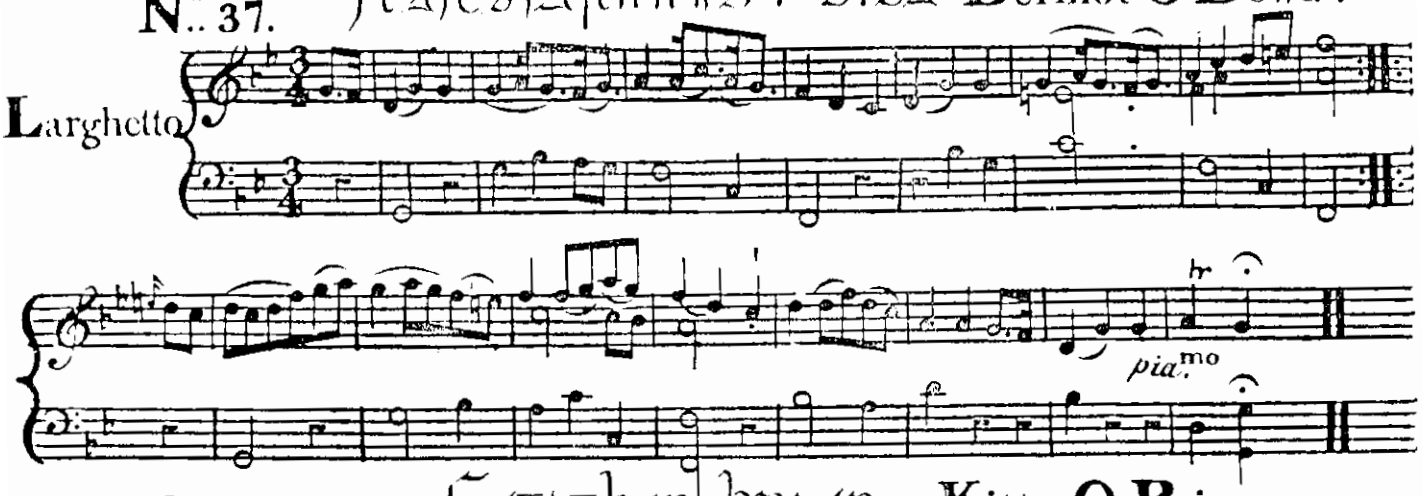
N°. 34. **The Forlorn Queen.**




No. 35.
The Snowy Breasted Pearl.
CAROLAN
Andante
pia.
for
sfor
pia.
formo
Dimo
piamo
No. 36.
Madge Malone.
CAROLAN
Andante
pia.
for
pia.

N°. 37. Dermot O Dowd.

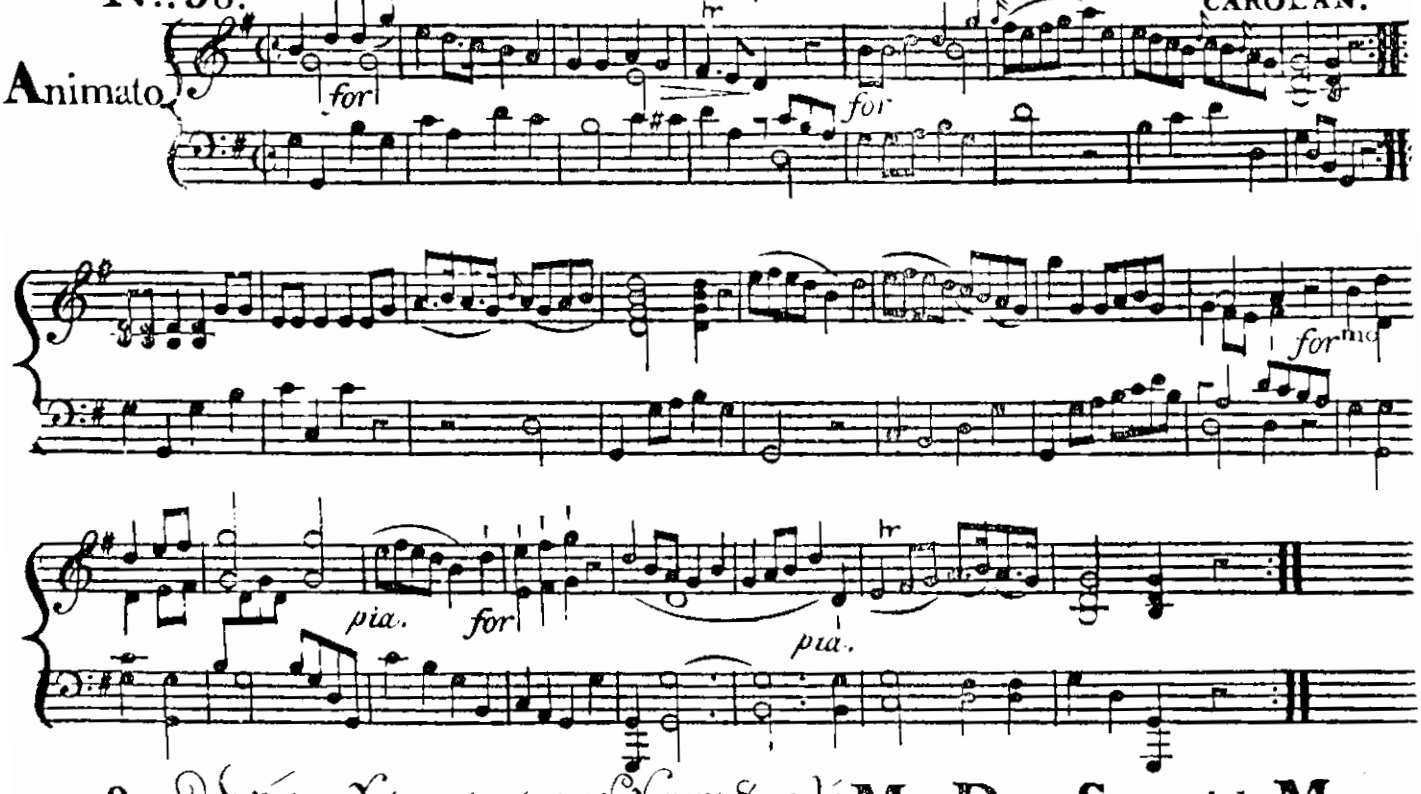
Larghetto



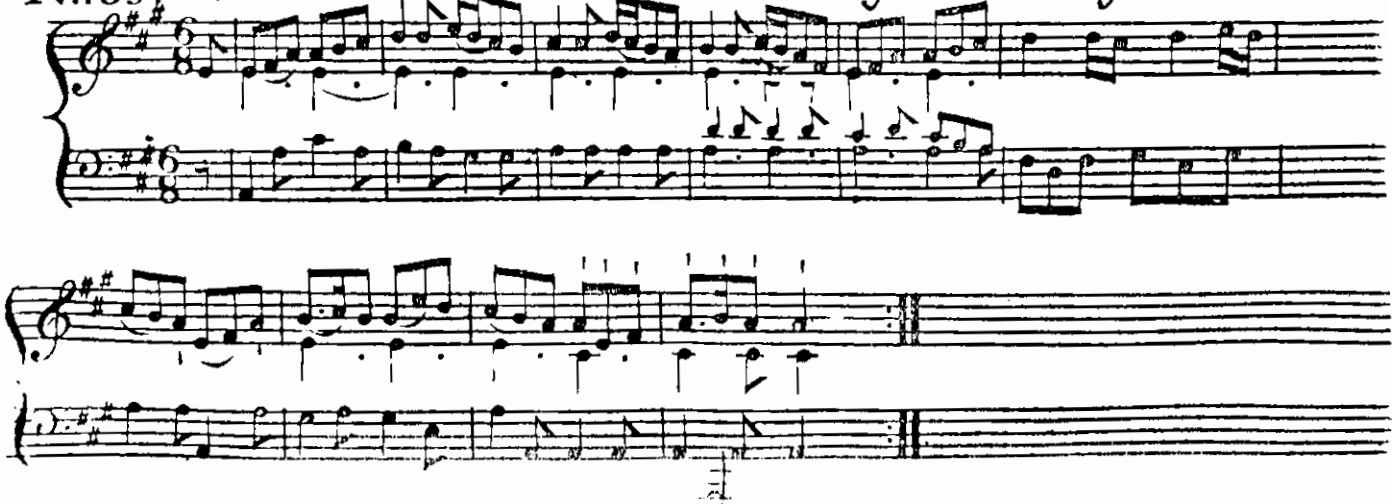
N°. 38. Kitty O Brian.

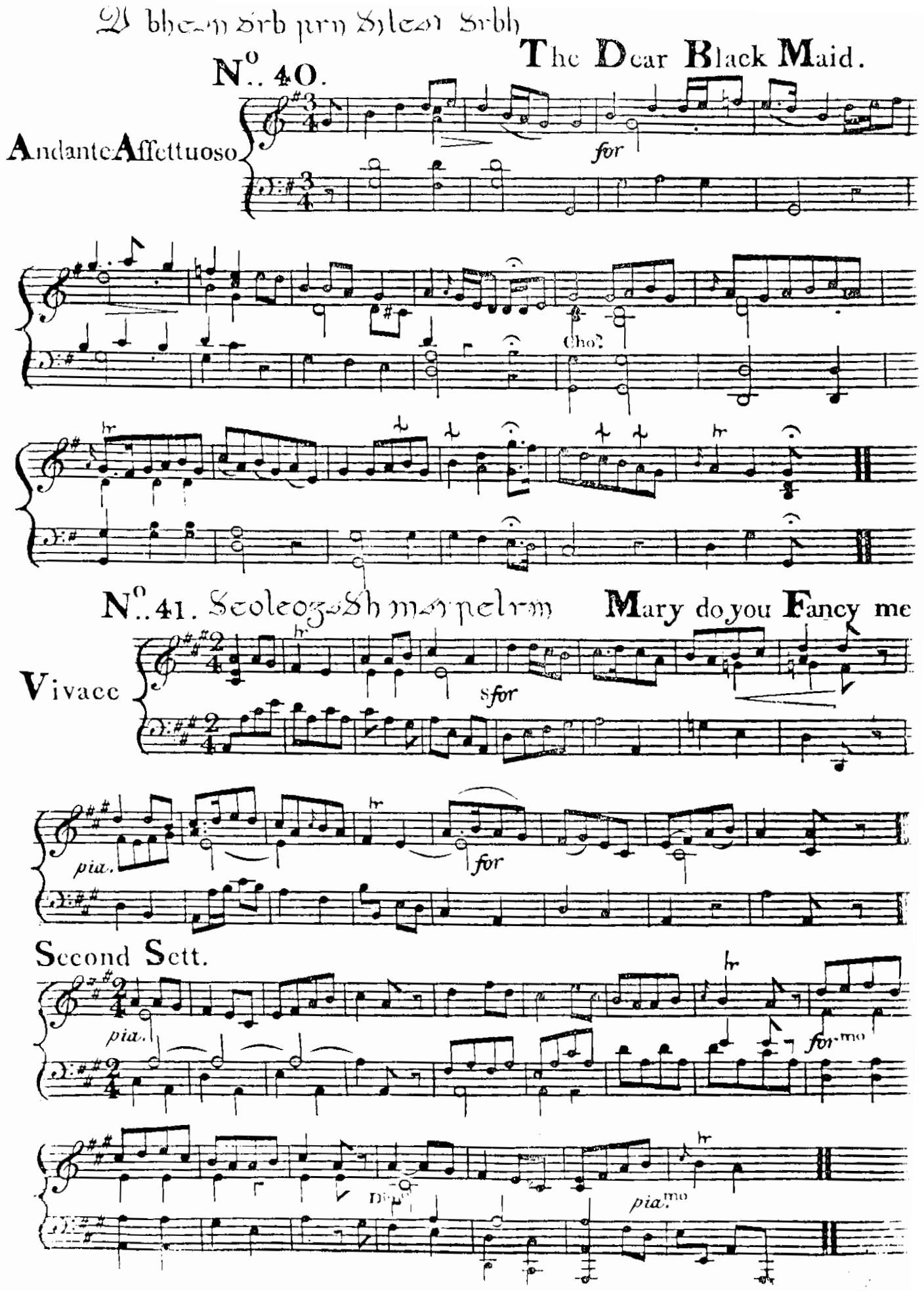
Animato

CAROLAN.



N°. 39. My Dear Stay with Me.

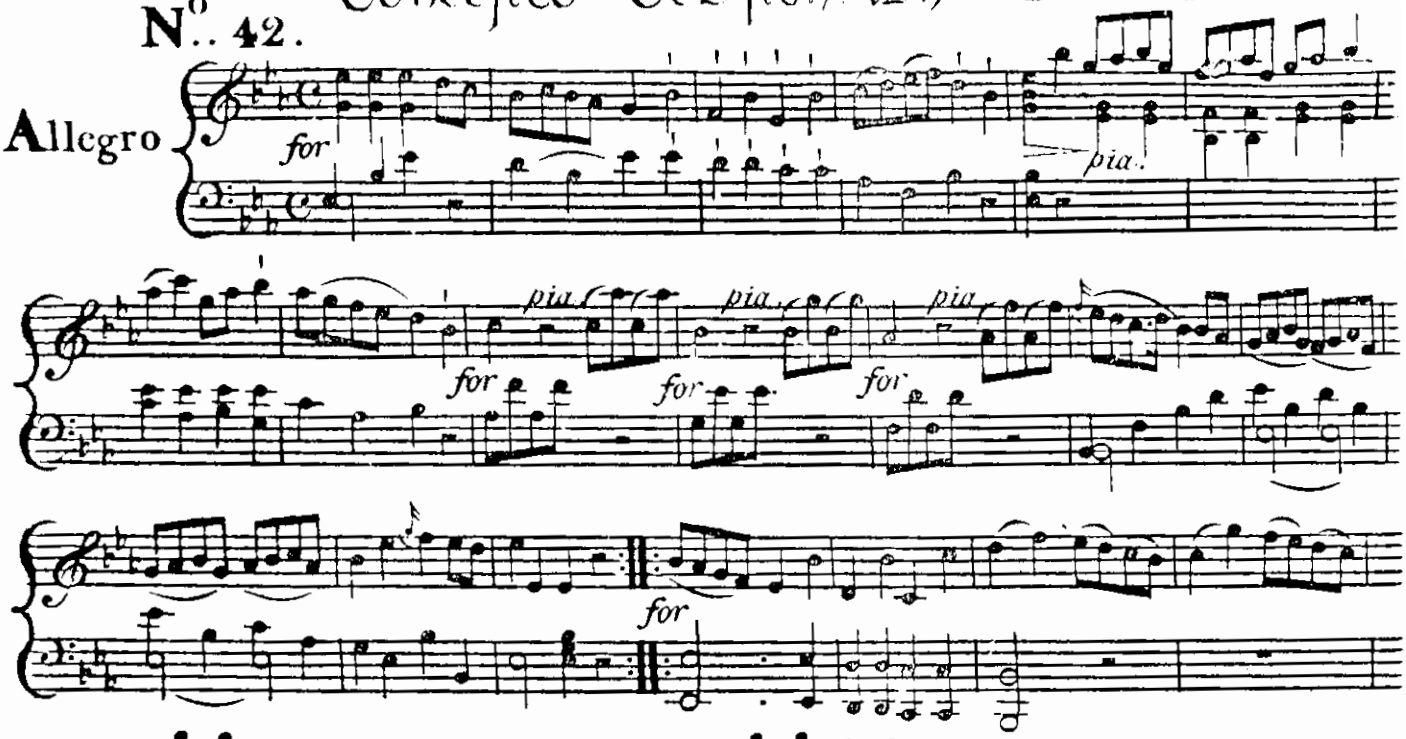



The Dear Black Maid.
No. 40.
Andante Affettuoso
for
Cho?
No. 41.
Mary do you Fancy me
Vivace
sfor
pia.
for
Second Sett.
pia.
for mo
Dim.
pia. mo

Concerto Carolan's Concerto.

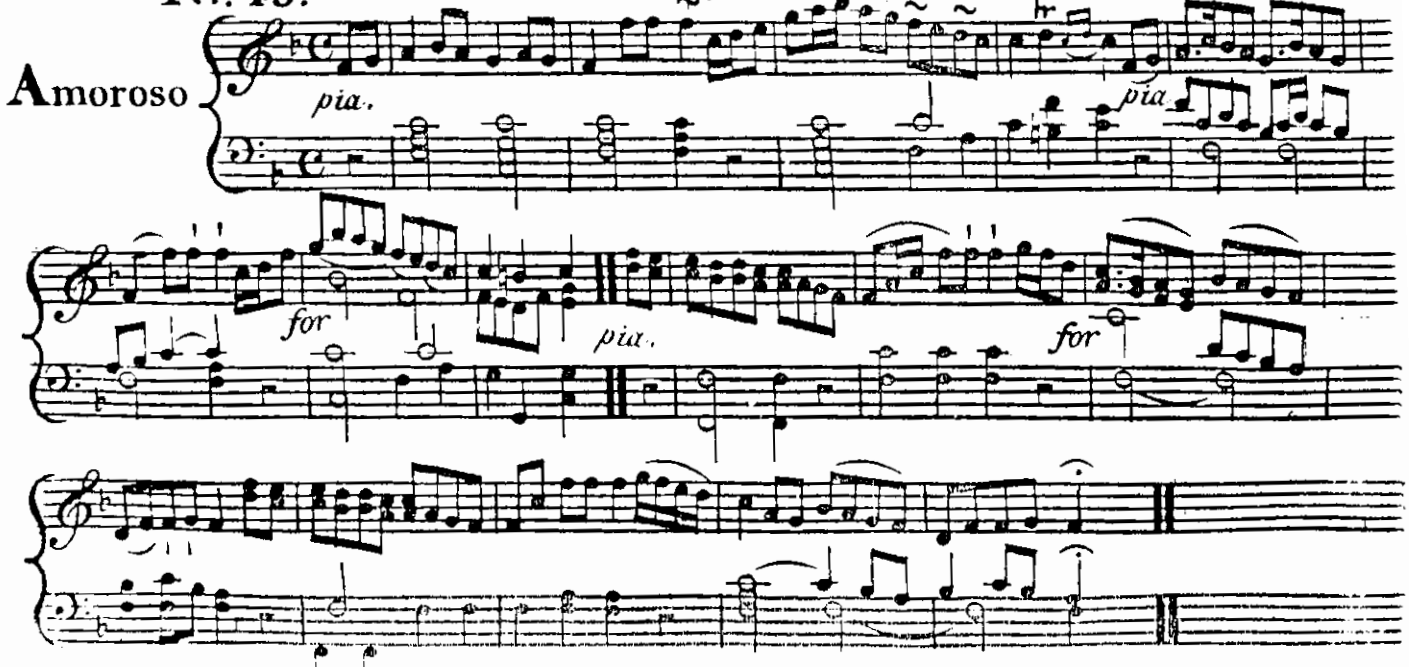
N°. 42.

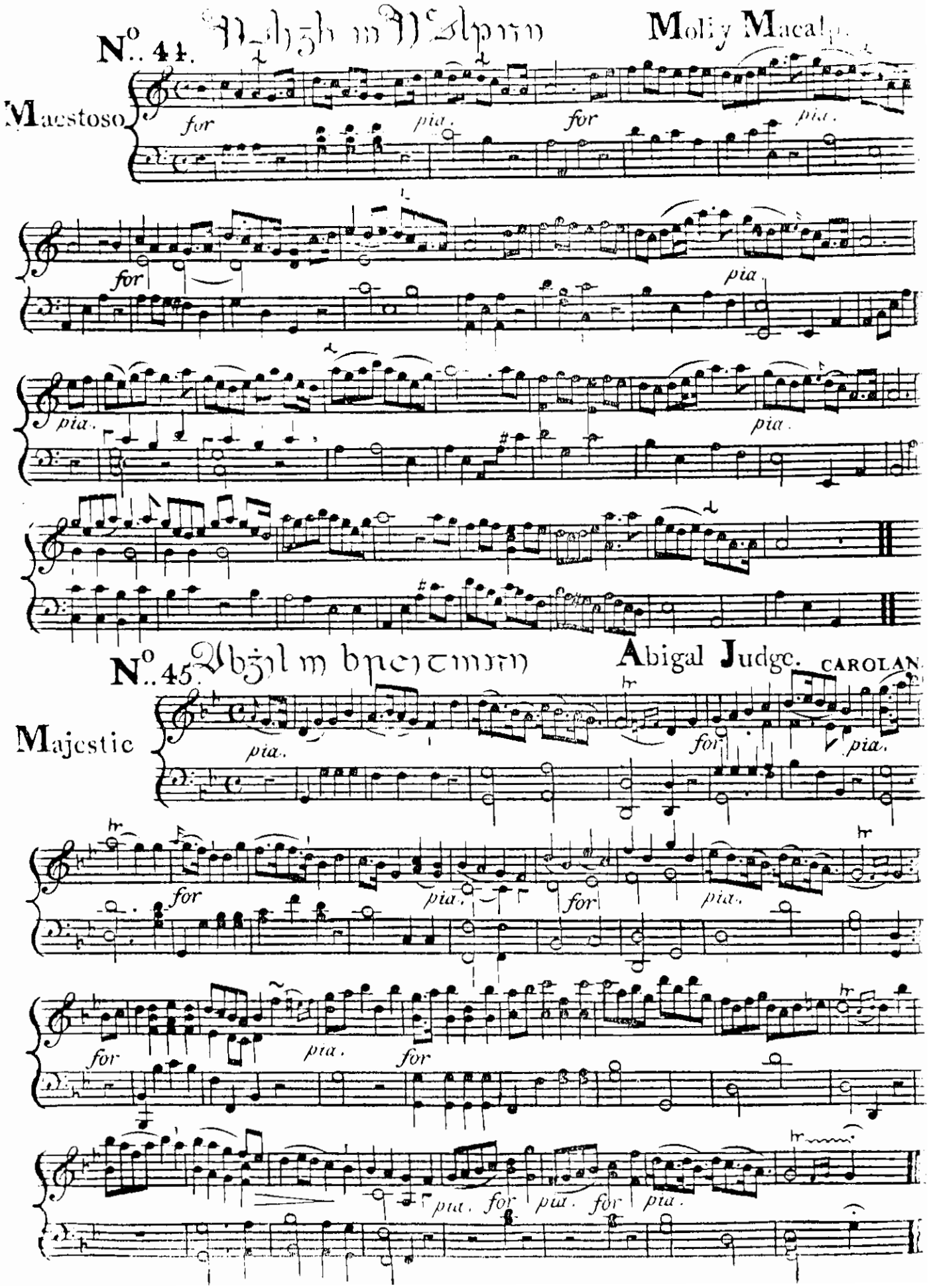
Allegro



N°. 43. The Little Harvest Rose.

Amoroso

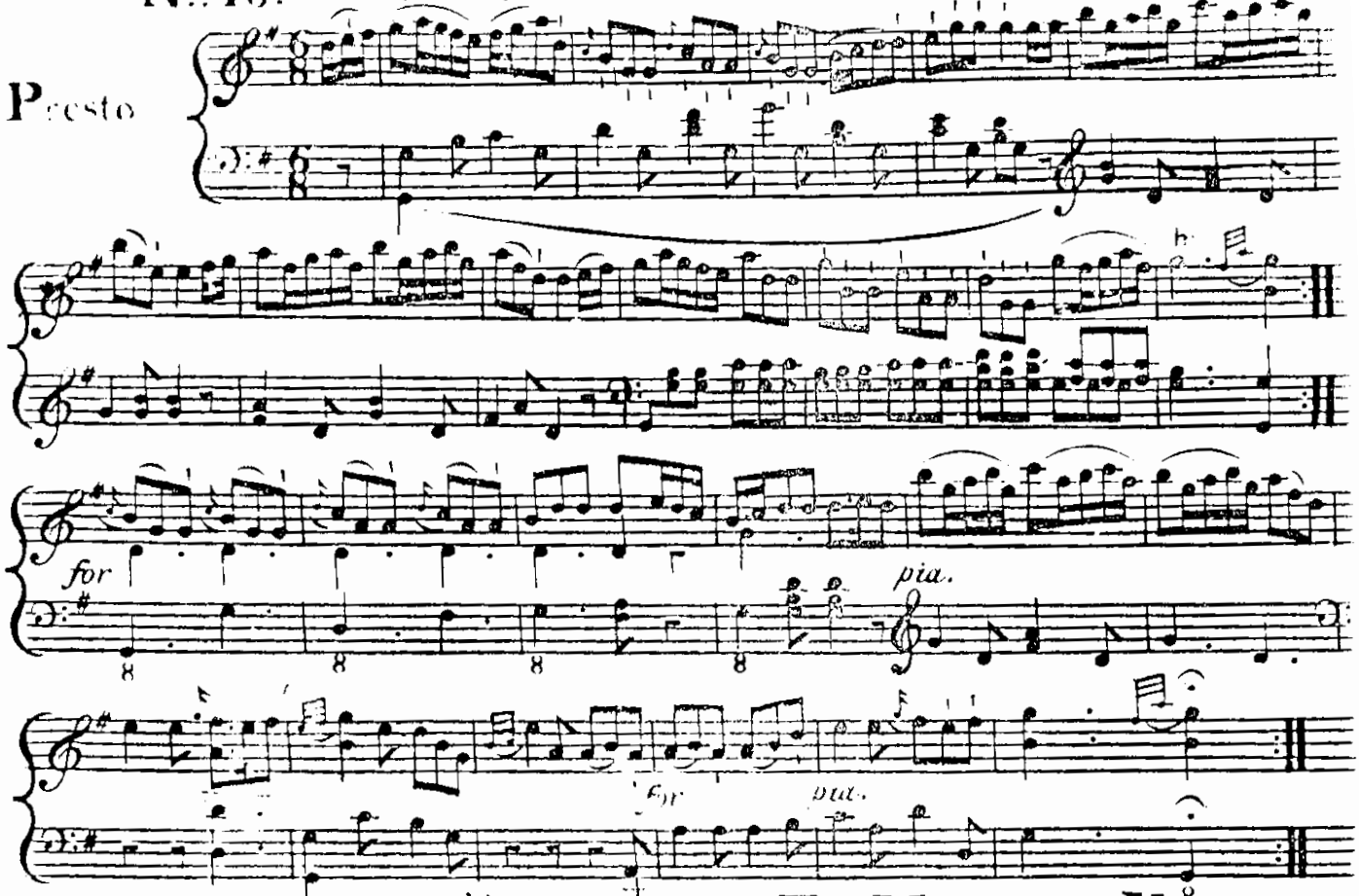



N°. 44.
Moll y Macalp.
Maestoso
for
pia.
N°. 45.
Abigal Judge.
CAROLAN.
Majestic
pia.
for

No. 46. Planxty Reilly

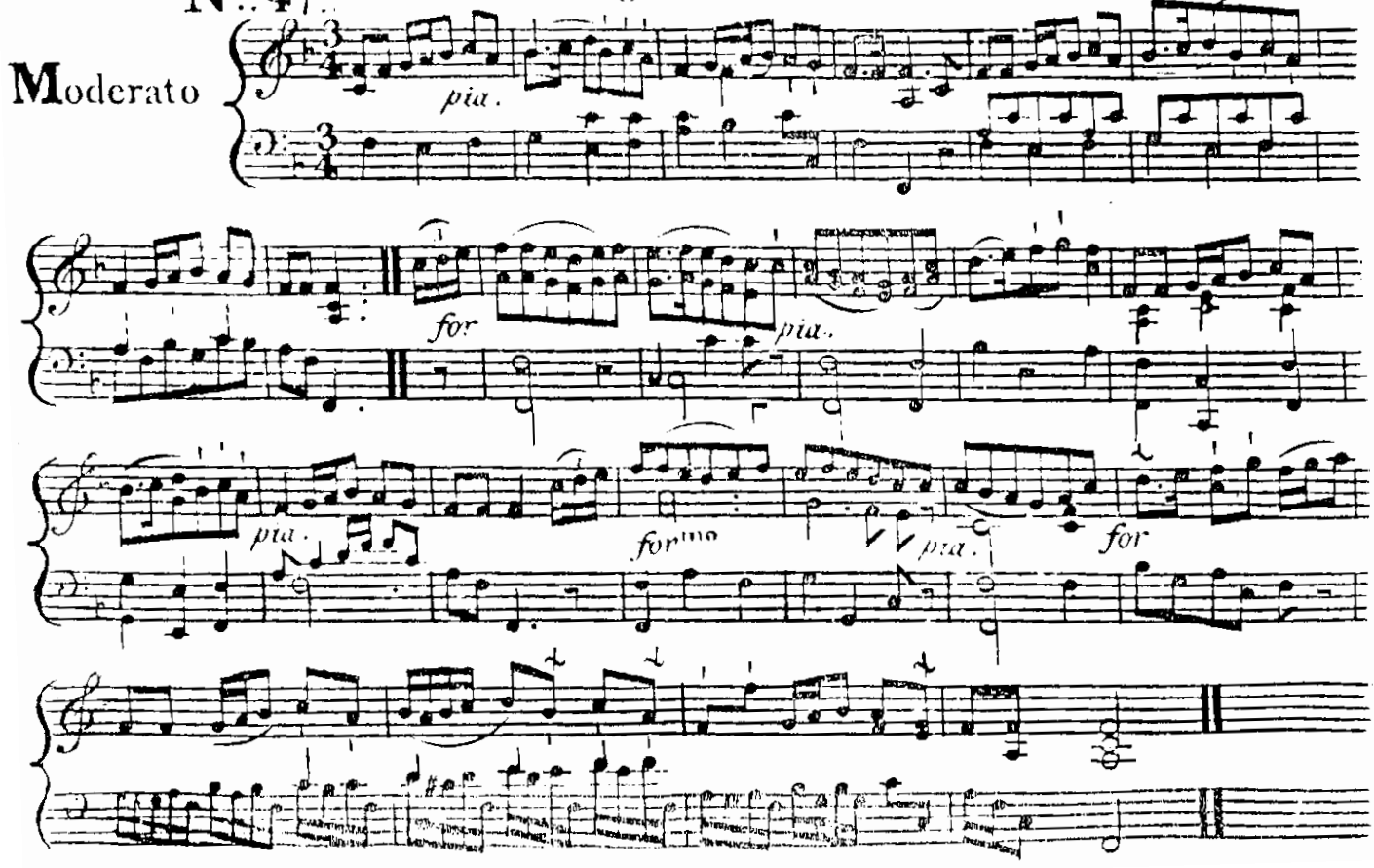
CAROLAN.

Presto

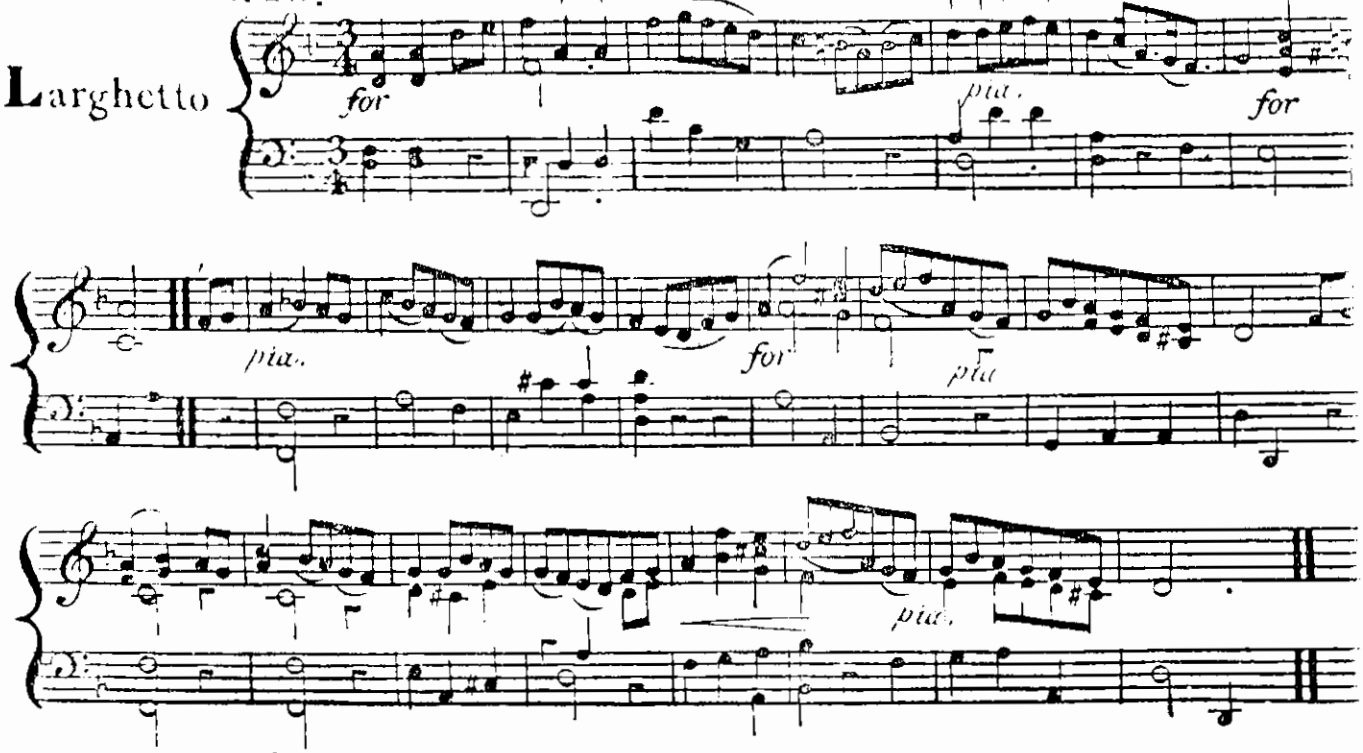


No. 47. The Maid of the Valley.

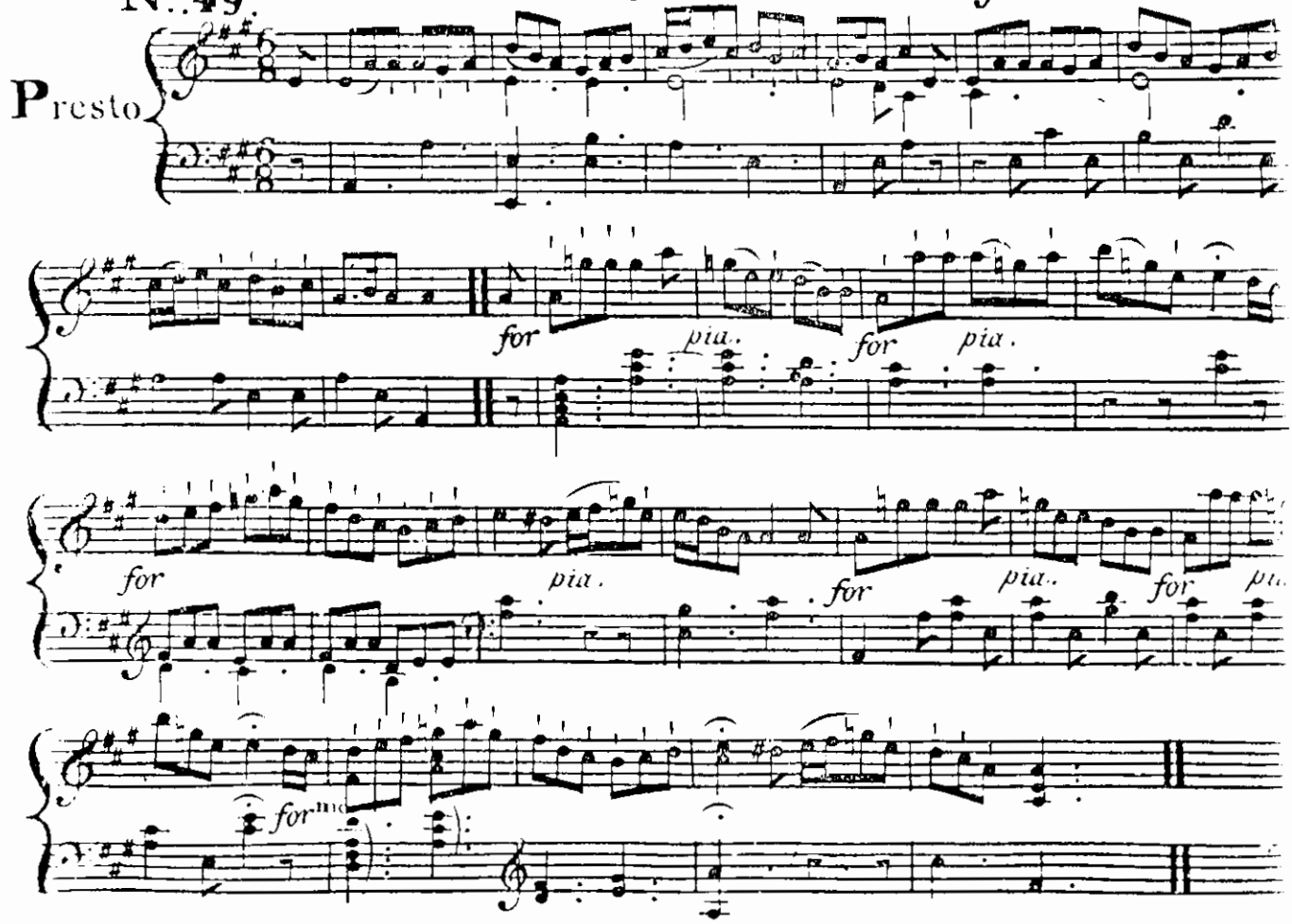
Moderato

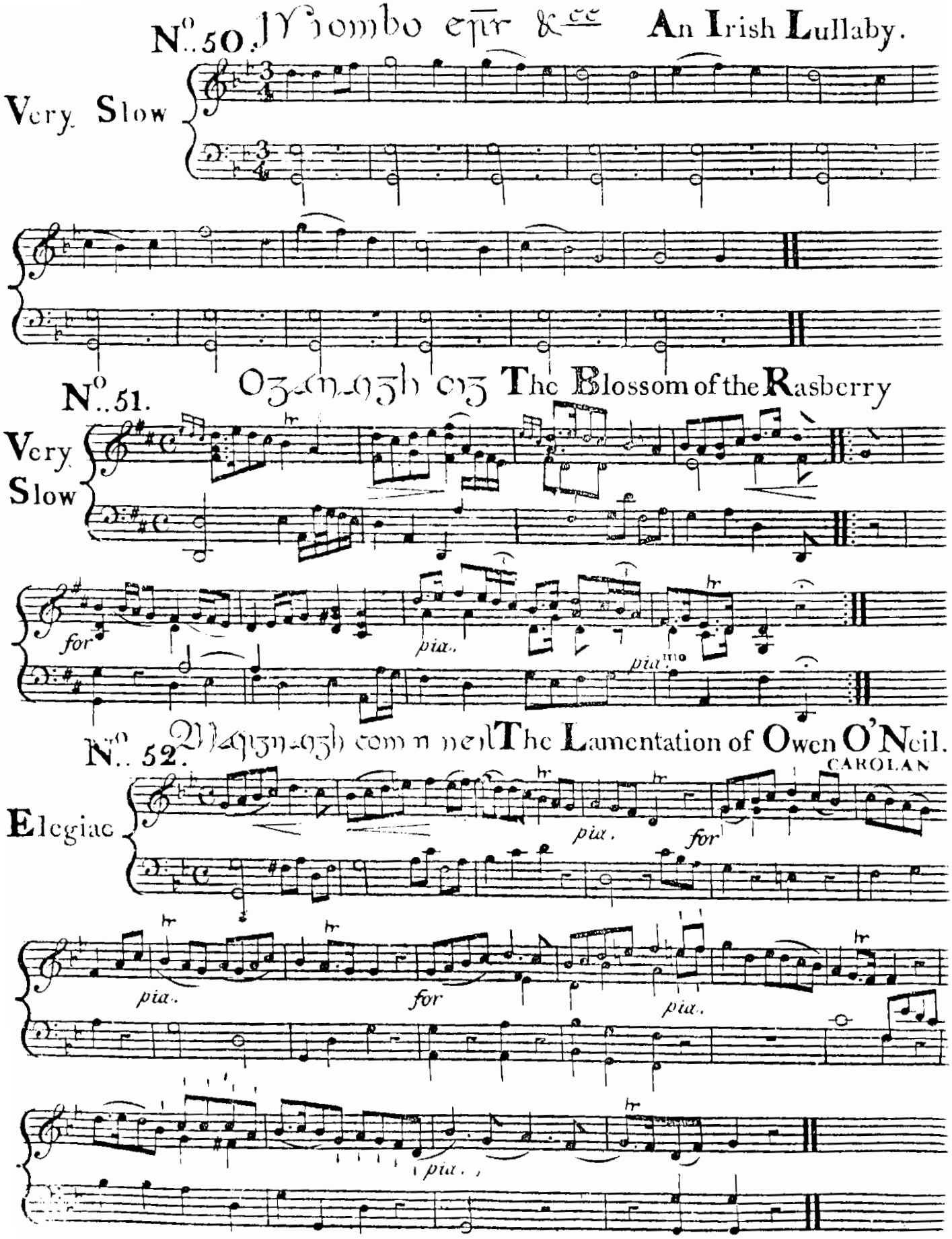


No. 48. Bhesp hom no eipe I Would Rather than Ireland.



No. 49. Leomn o Reillzh Hespzs Bs John O Reilly the Active.

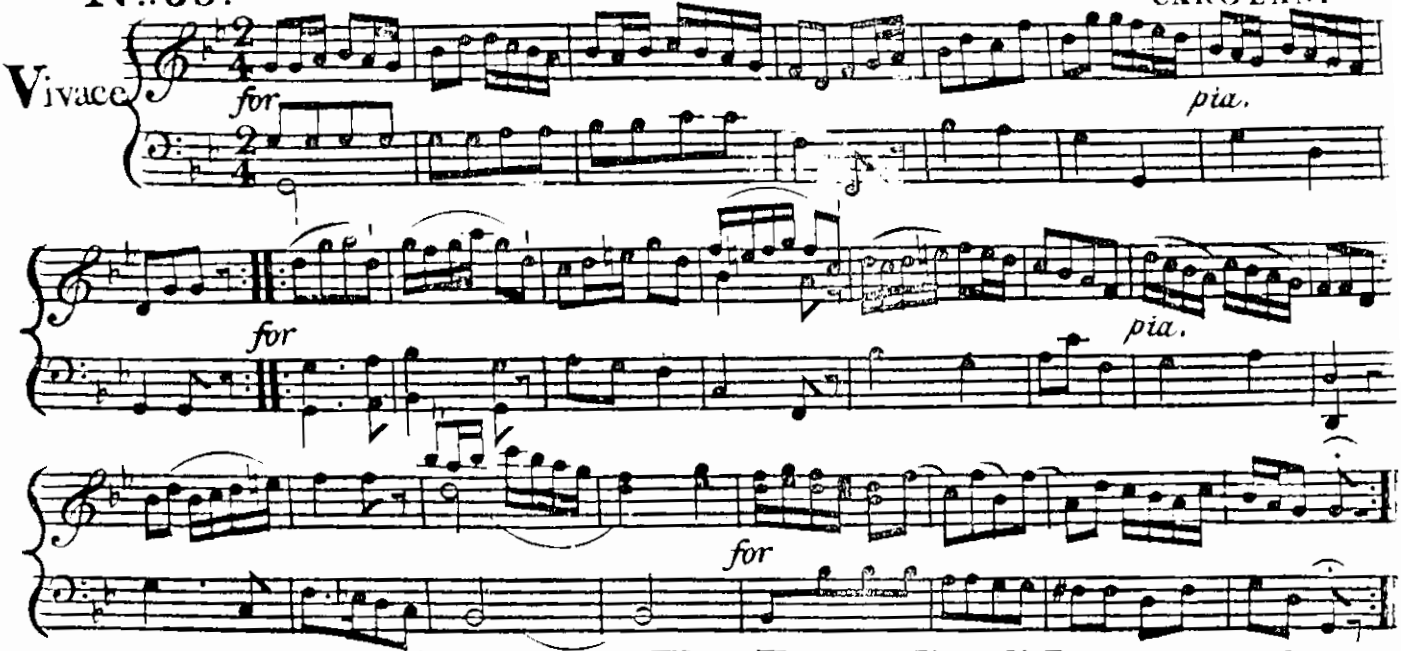



No. 50.
An Irish Lullaby.
Very Slow
No. 51.
The Blossom of the Rasberry
Very Slow
for
pia.
pia.mo
No. 52.
The Lamentation of Owen O'Neil.
CAROLAN
Elegiac
pia.
for
pia.
for
pia.
pia.

N°. 53. Nanny Mc Dermotroe.

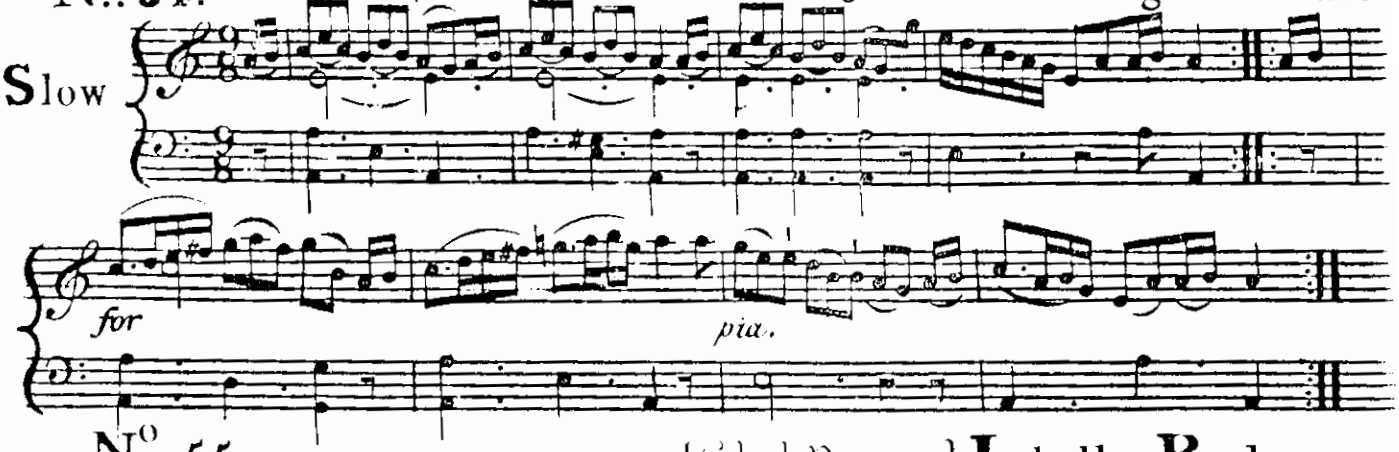
CAROLAN.

Vivace



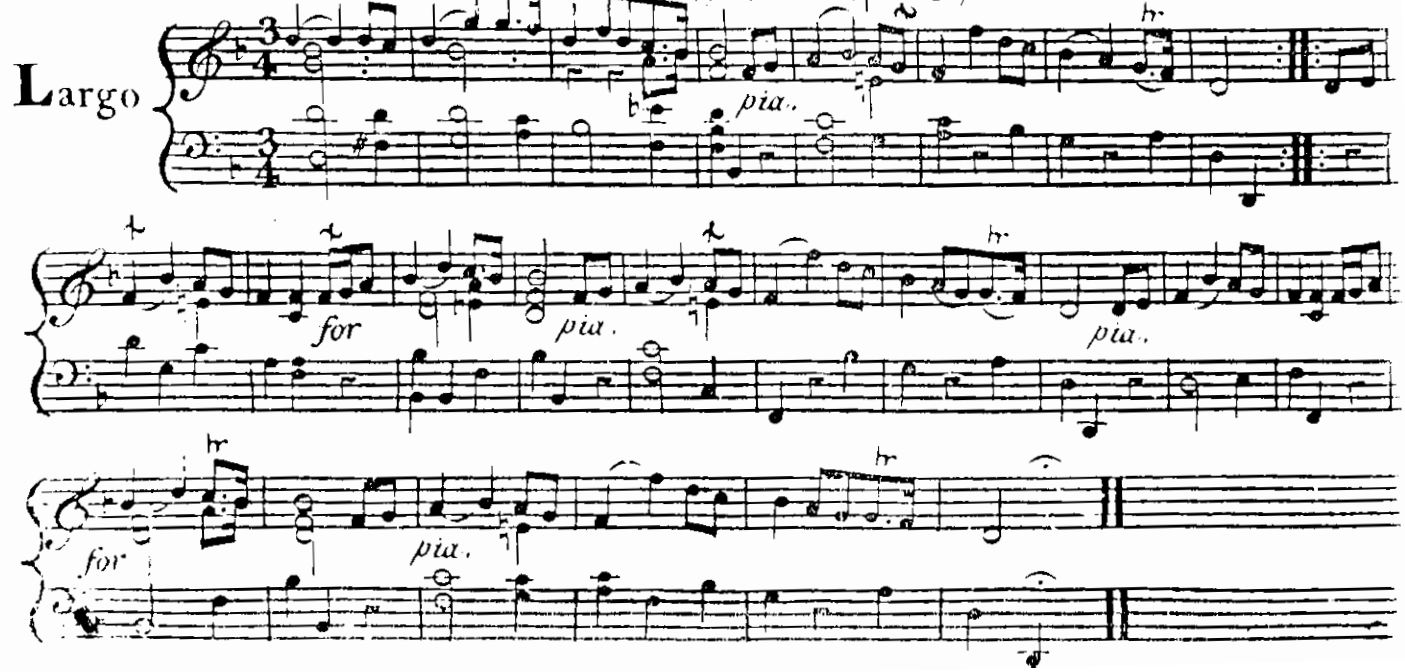
N°. 54. The Pretty Girl Milking the Cows.

Slow



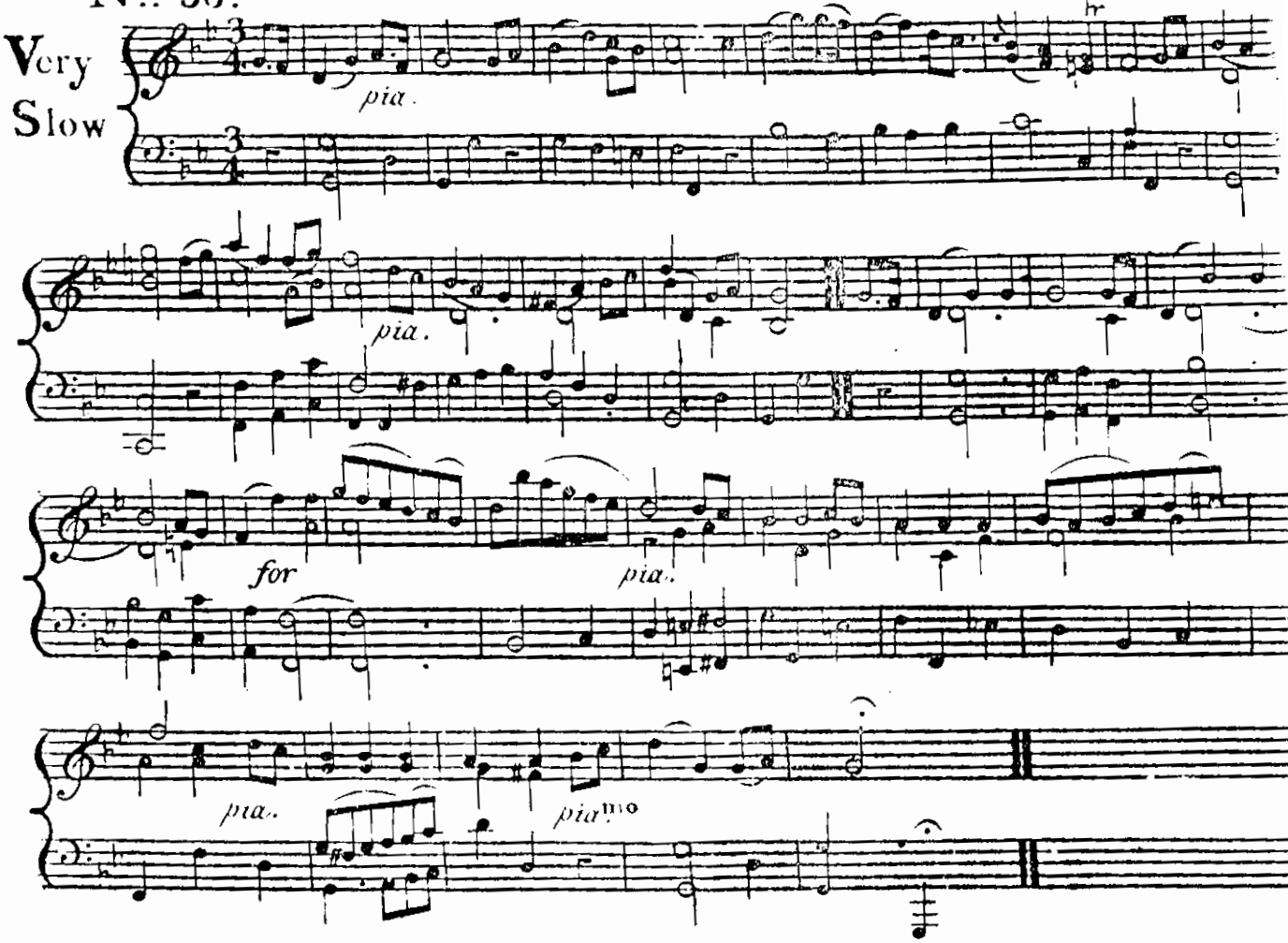
N°. 55. Isabella Burk.

Largo

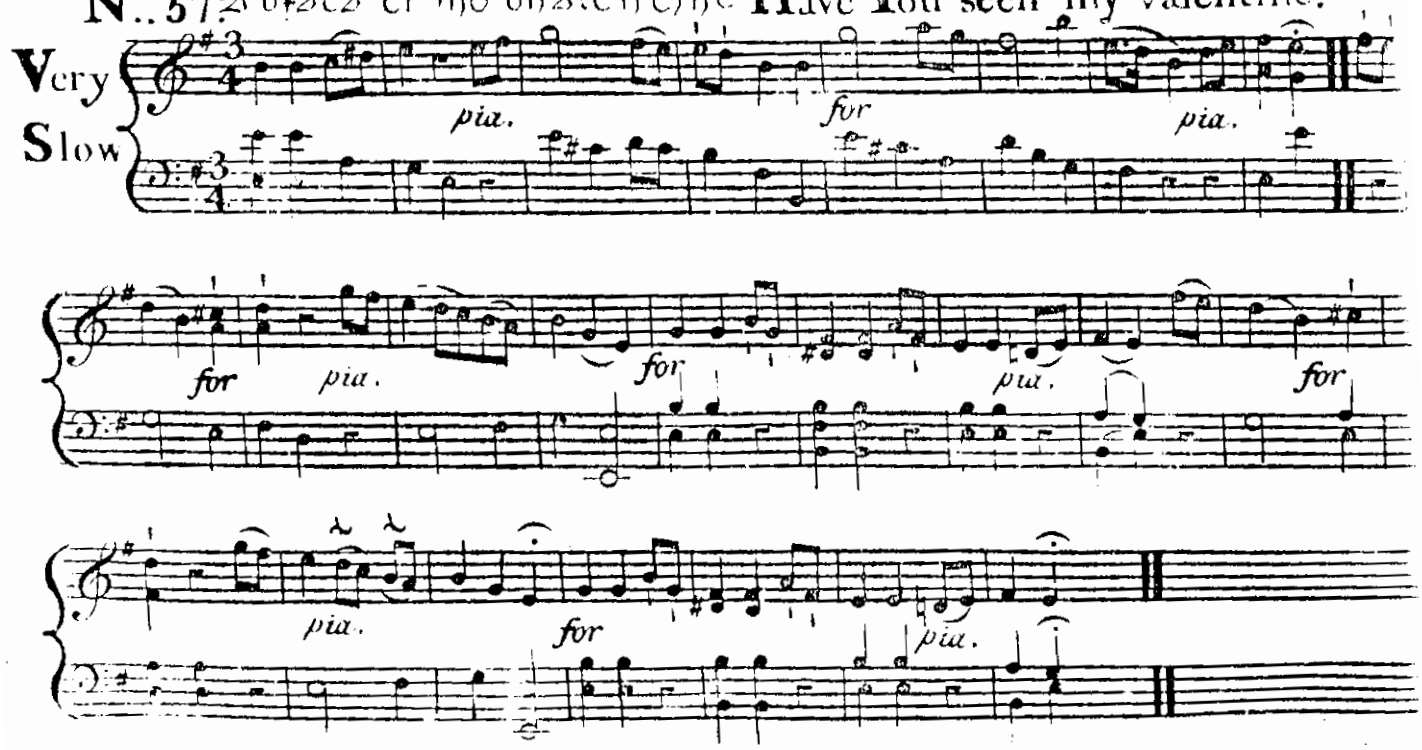


No. 56. Topylaz oz mc Donach Young Terence Mc Donough

CAROLAN.

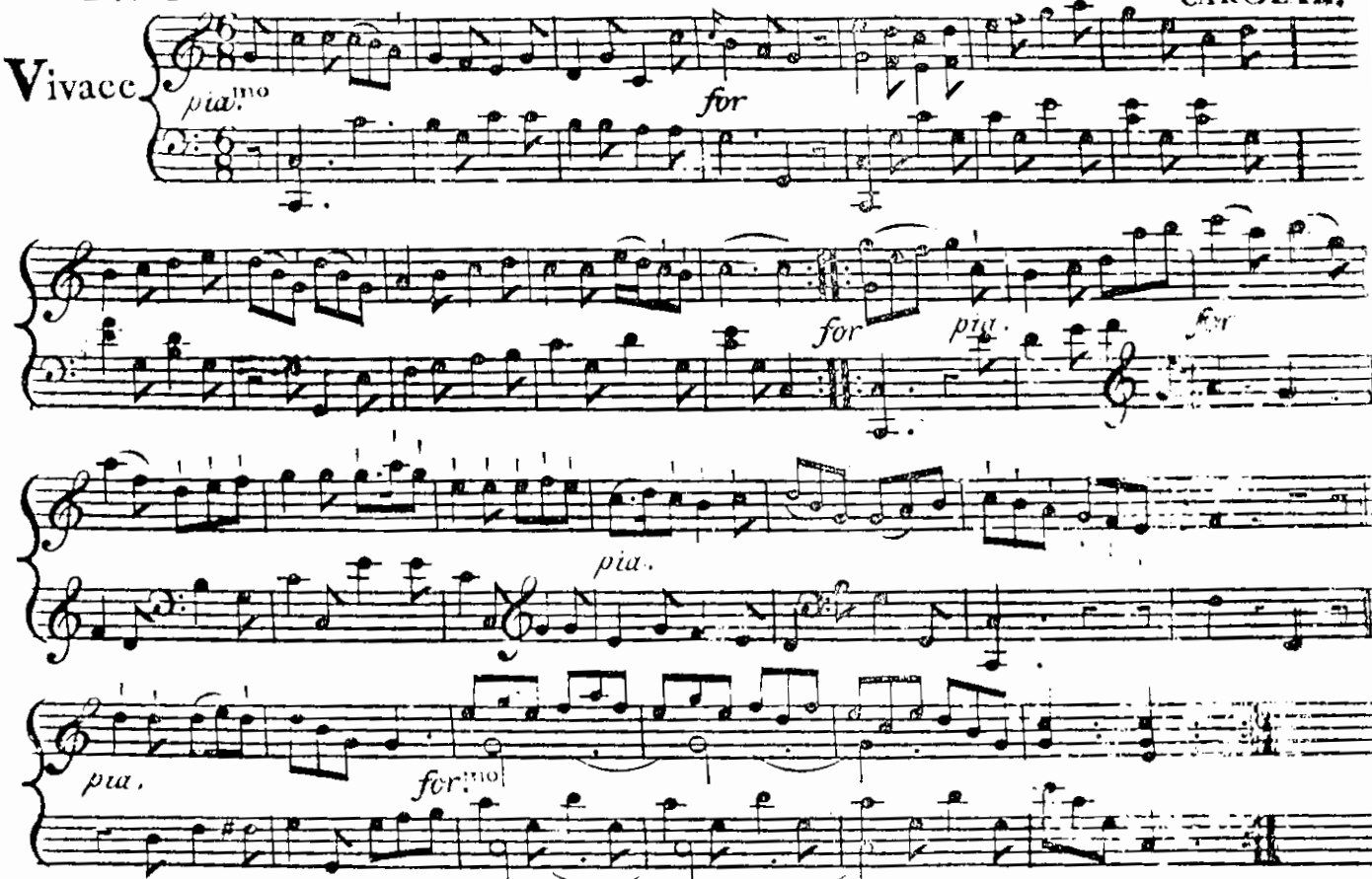


No. 57. Abfaca tr mo bhalentine Have You seen my Valentine.



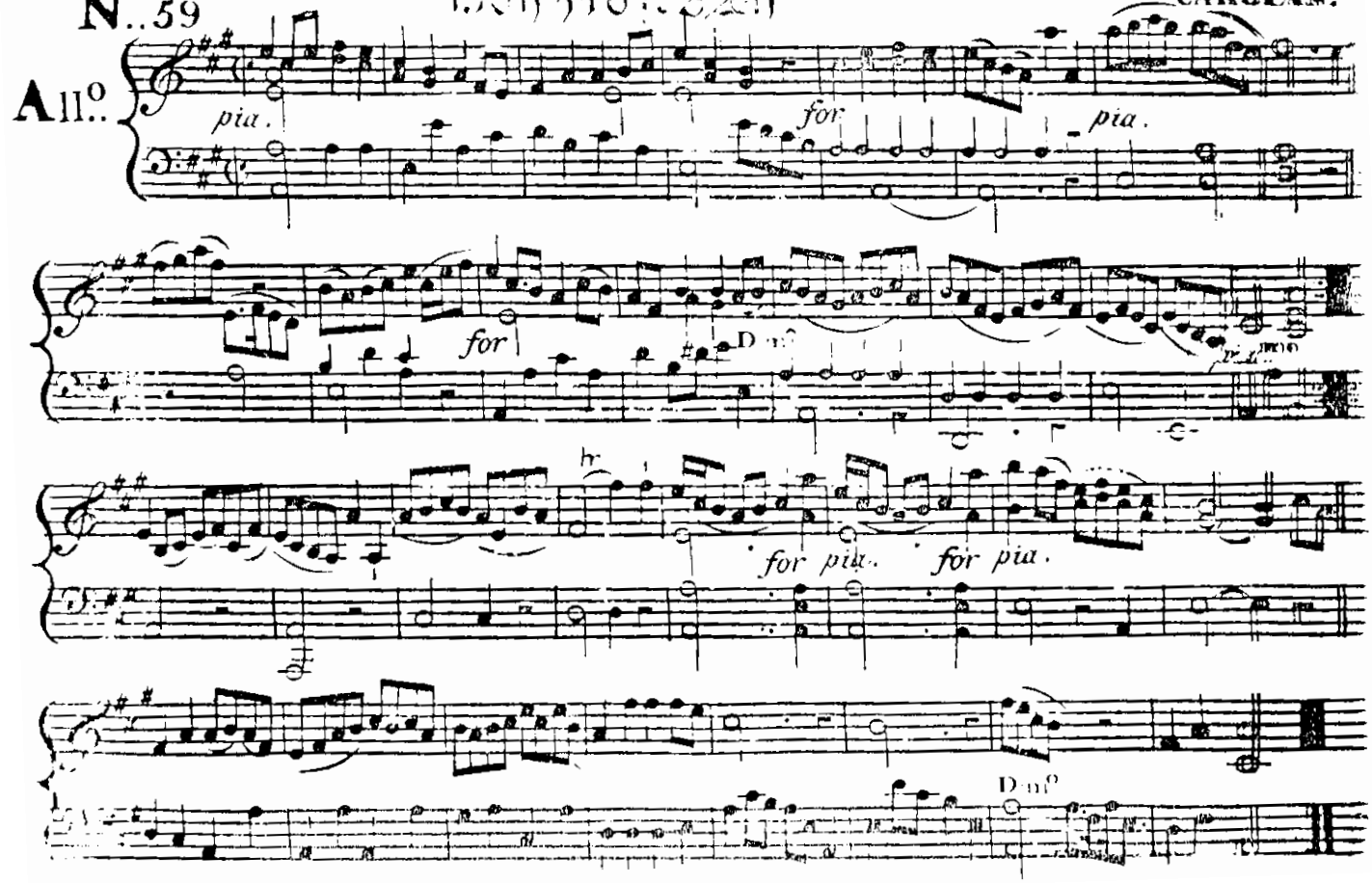
N.o 58 Planxty Johnston. CAROLAN.

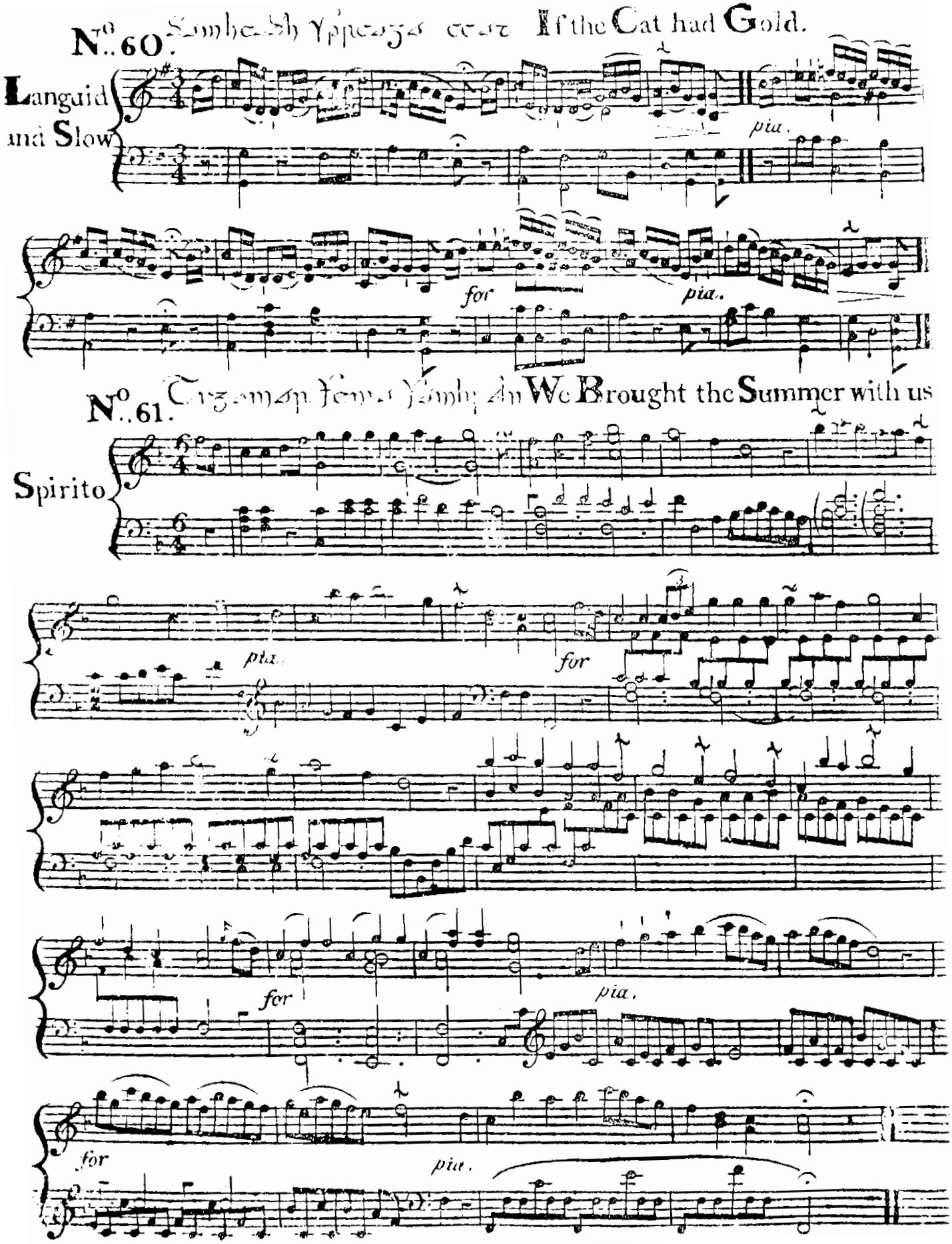
Vivace



N.o 59 Bob Jordon. CAROLAN.

All.o



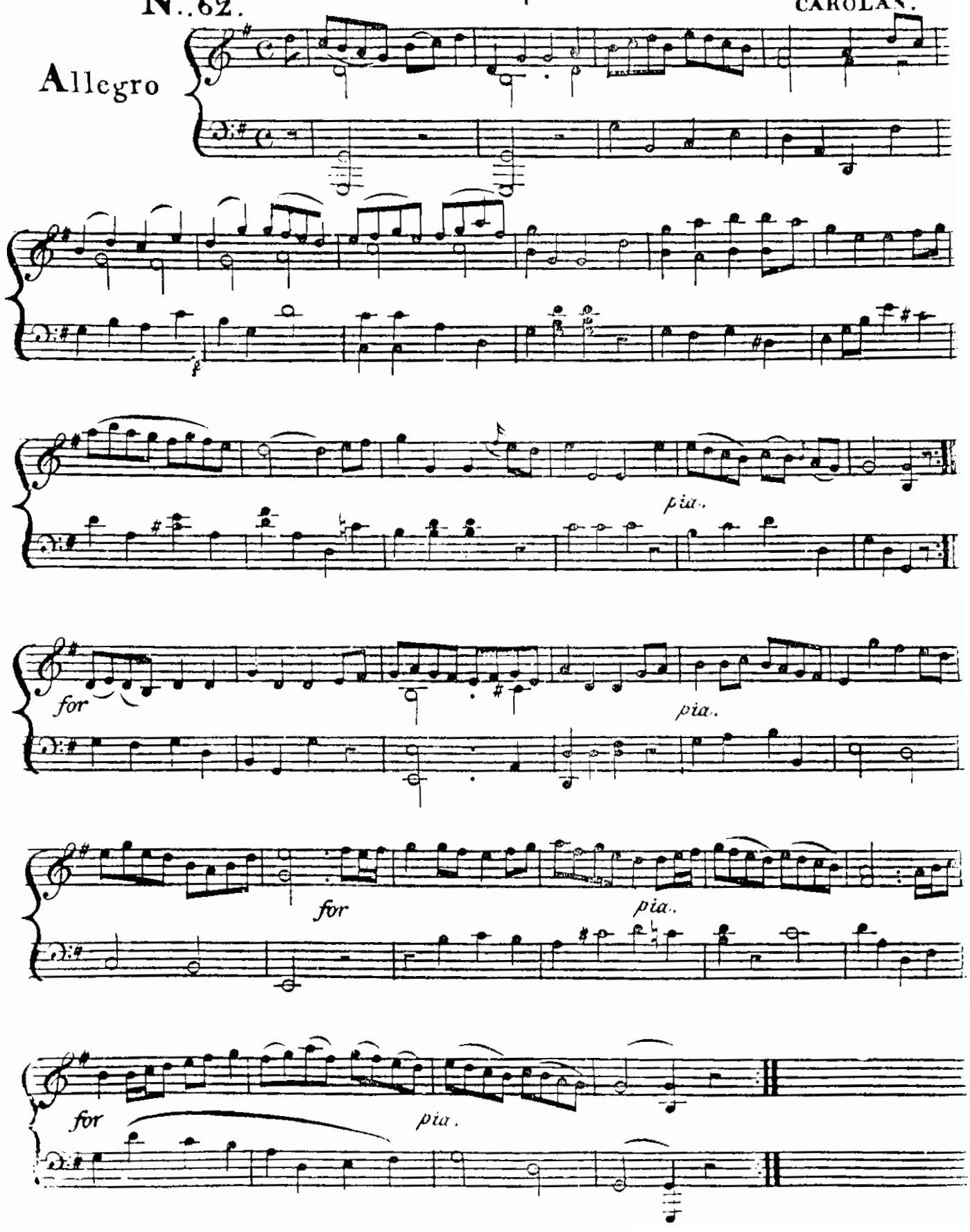

No. 60.
If the Cat had Gold.
Languid and Slow
pia.
for
pia.
No. 61.
We Brought the Summer with us
Spirito
pia.
for
for
pia.
for
pia.

Tomas O'Burk

Thomas O'Burk.

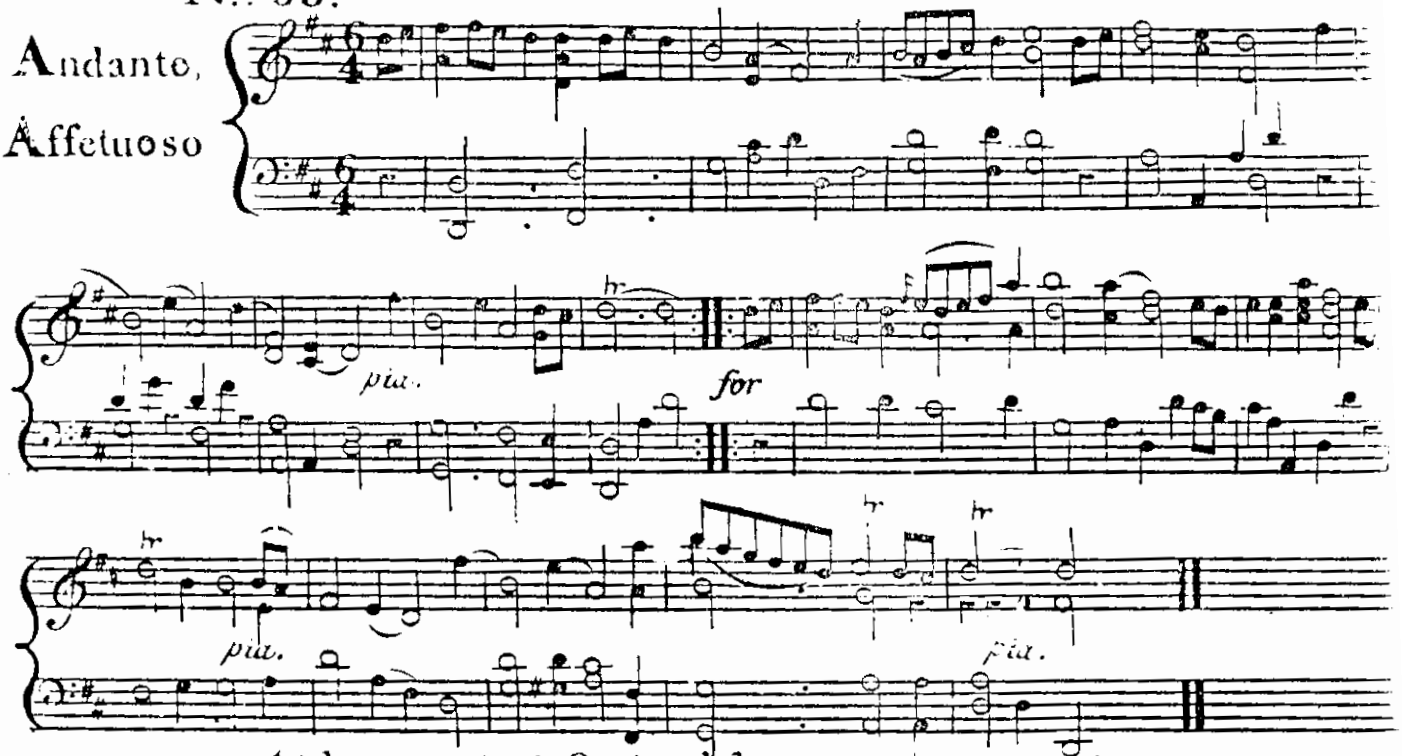
CAROLAN.

N°. 62.



No. 63. The Little & Great Mountain.

Andante, Affetuoso

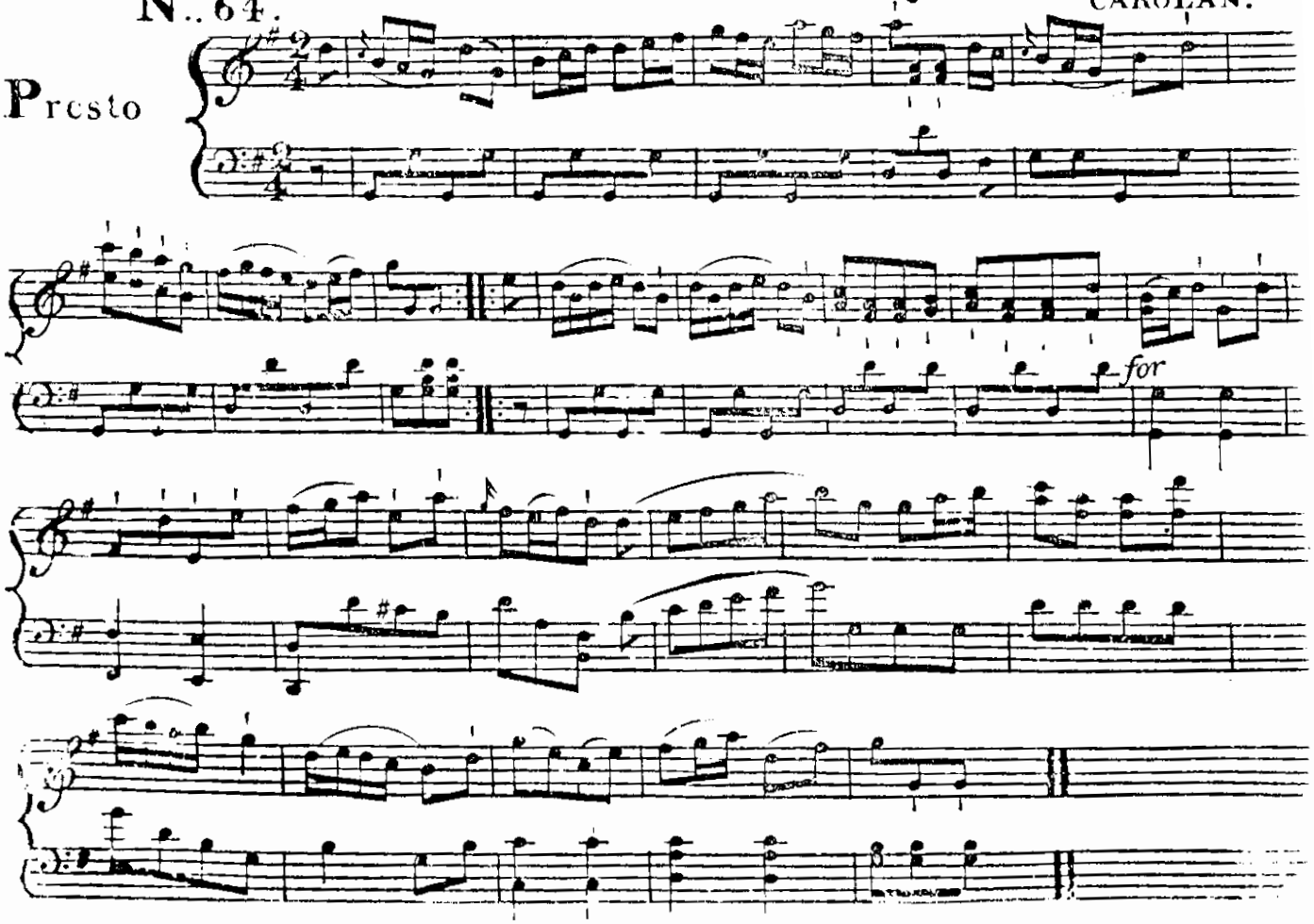


pia. for pia. pia.

No. 64. Planxty Mc Guire.

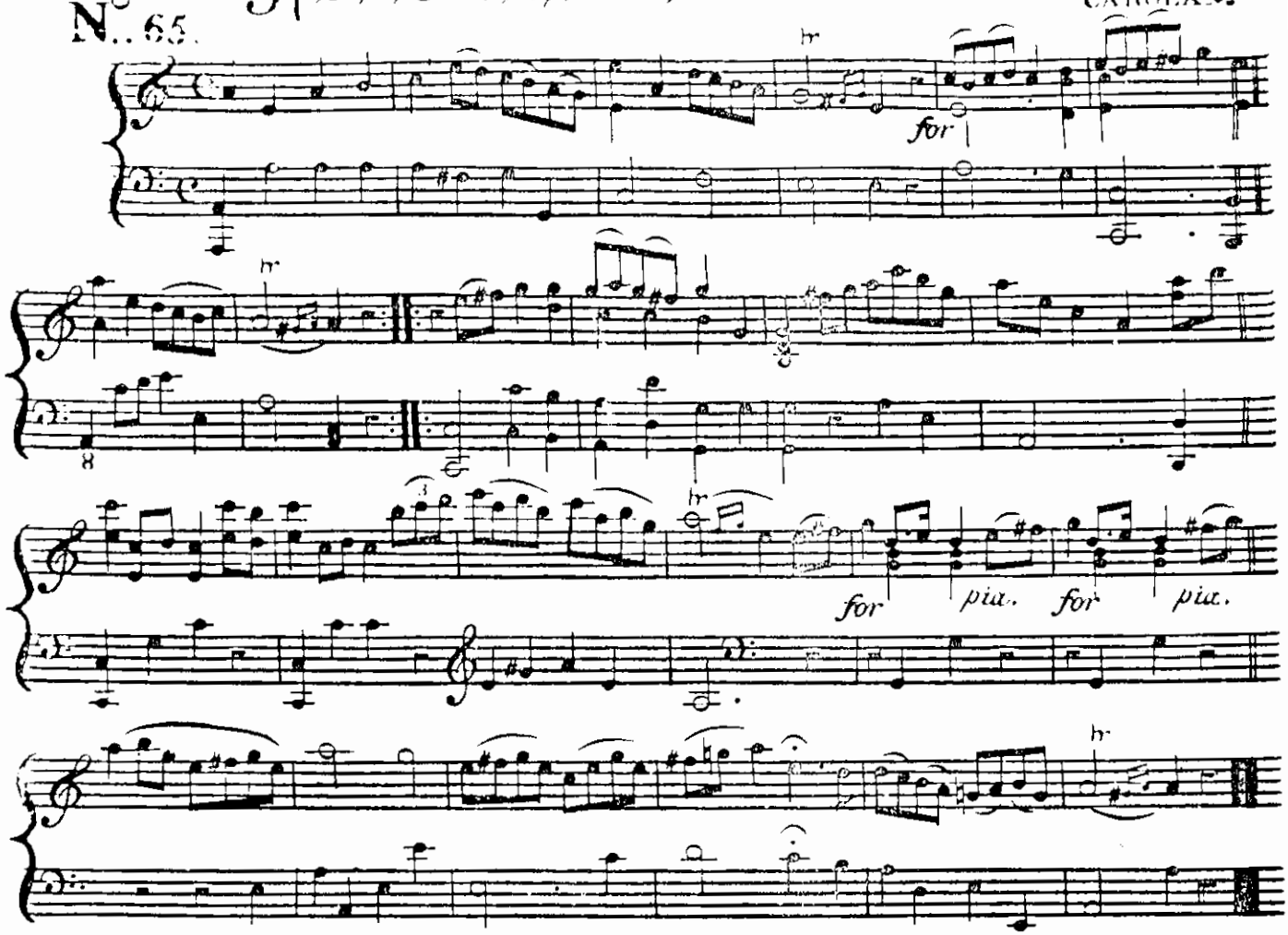
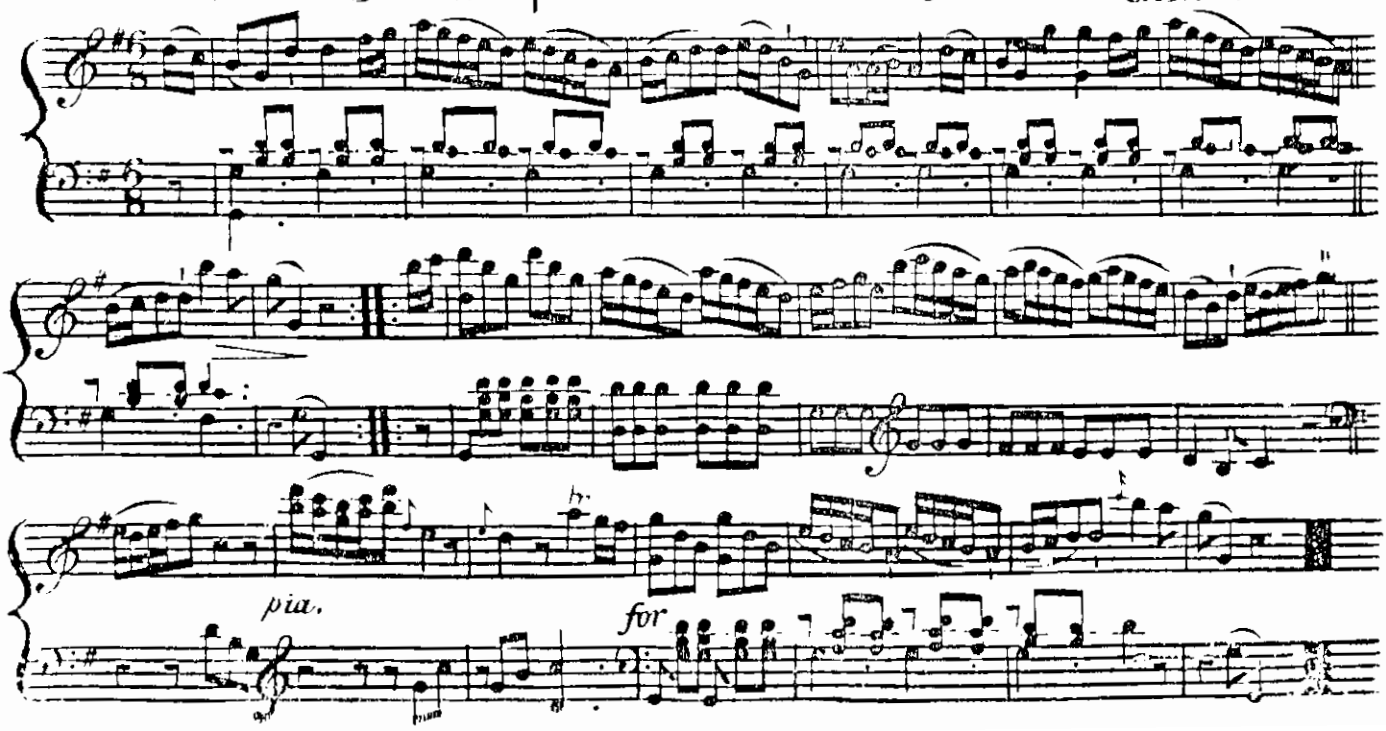
CAROLAN.

Presto



for

N°..65. Grace Nugent. CAROLAN.



N°..66. Planxty Dillon. CAROLAN.