General Collection

of the

ANCIENT IRISH MUSIC,

Containing a variety of

Admired Airs

never before Published, and also

The Compositions of

CONOLAN and CAROLAN;

Collected from the Harpers *&c. in the different*

Provinces of

IRELAND,

and adapted for the

Piano-Forte,

with a Prefatory Introduction

Vol. 1. *Price 10s. 6d.*

By

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E Bunting

Edward Bunting

Mrs Fuller

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 Connollan and Carolan, have before been ſelected; but even 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 a long 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, and 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 were no copies extant, and which were therefore likely ſoon to become extinct.

This end was, in a great 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 alledged, 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 increaſing delight. 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 ſmiled on being interrogated concerning 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 it with the utmoſt reverence, as they ſeem never to have ventured to make the ſlighteſt innovation in it during its deſcent. 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 on 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, admitting of the addition of a Baſs with more facility than ſuch as were leſs ancient. Hence we may conclude, that their authors muſt neceſſarily have been excellent performers, verſed in the ſcientific part of their profeſſion, and that they had originally a view to the addition of *harmony* in the compoſition of their pieces. It is remarkable that the performers all tuned their inſtruments on the ſame principle, totally ignorant of the principle itſelf, and without being able to aſſign any reaſon either 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 tranſmitted 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,

Itinerary, which contains this remarkable paſſage: " The attention of this people to muſical in-
" ſtruments I find worthy of commendation; in which their ſkill is, *beyond all compariſon ſuperior*
" *to that of any nation I have 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 modulations and moſt intricate arrangement 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 al-
" ways 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 Cambrenſis, that the Welſh 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 into Wales, who (he boldly aſſerts) deviſed in a man-
" ner all the inſtrumental Muſic, that is now there uſed: as appeareth, as well by the books
" written of the ſame, as alſo by the names of the tunes and meaſures uſed among 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 teſtimony of Strabo, Diodorus and Ammianus Marcellinus, exiſted among the ruder branches of the Celtic tribes, before the time of Auguſtus. We find them under the ſame name in Ireland from the earlieſt period of our 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 diſſi-

* Tranſlation from Topog. Hib. Diſtinct. 3. c. 11. † Hiſtory of Camb. p. 191. Edit. 1584. ‡ Notes on DRAYT. *Polyolb.* Song.

pation,

pation, we cannot but be aſtoniſhed at the prodigious powers of his mind. He has occaſionally tried almoſt every ſtile in 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 different 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. Stafford. 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 compoſition 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 had an opportunity of copying 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 VIII. a very modern period when compared with that in which the air was compoſed. *Scarfuint na Gompanach*, or the *Parting of Friends*, (No. 25) is conſidered as very ancient. It is often played by harpers when the audience are about to ſeparate, 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.

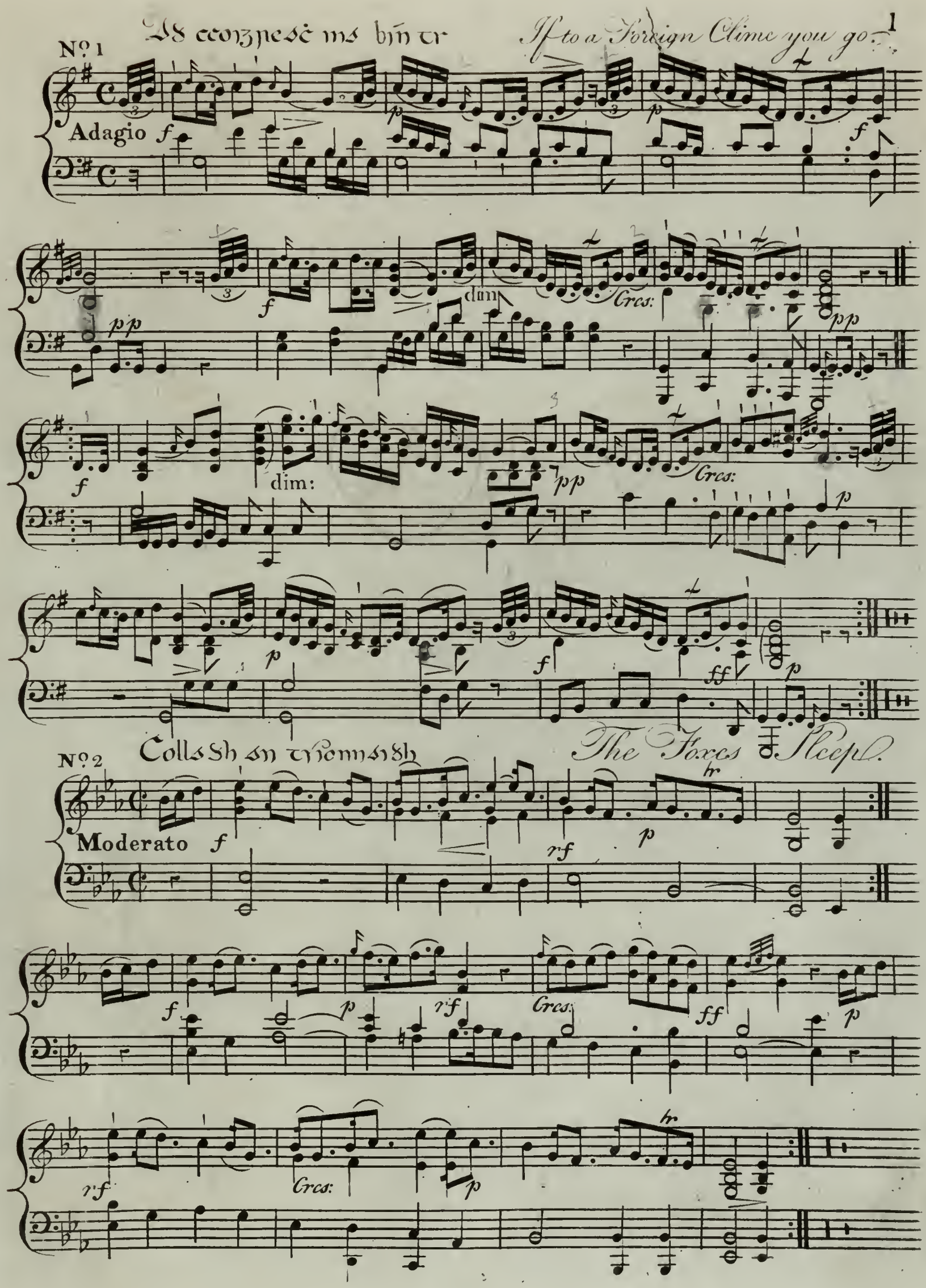
The tune called *Thugamar fein a Samhra lin*, (No. 61) is probably extremely ancient. It was ſung by the band of virgins that went out of Dublin to welcome the Duke of Ormond, when he landed in Ireland. The ancient air *Ta an ſamradh teacht*, or the *Summer is coming*, (No. 7) is uſed upon the opening of ſummer in different parts of the kingdom. Strange as it may appear, this proves to be the ſame ſong in eſſence, both as to poetry and muſic, which Dr. Burney has publiſhed and written ſo voluminous a critique on, as the firſt piece of Muſic ever ſet in ſcore in Great Britain. The extreme

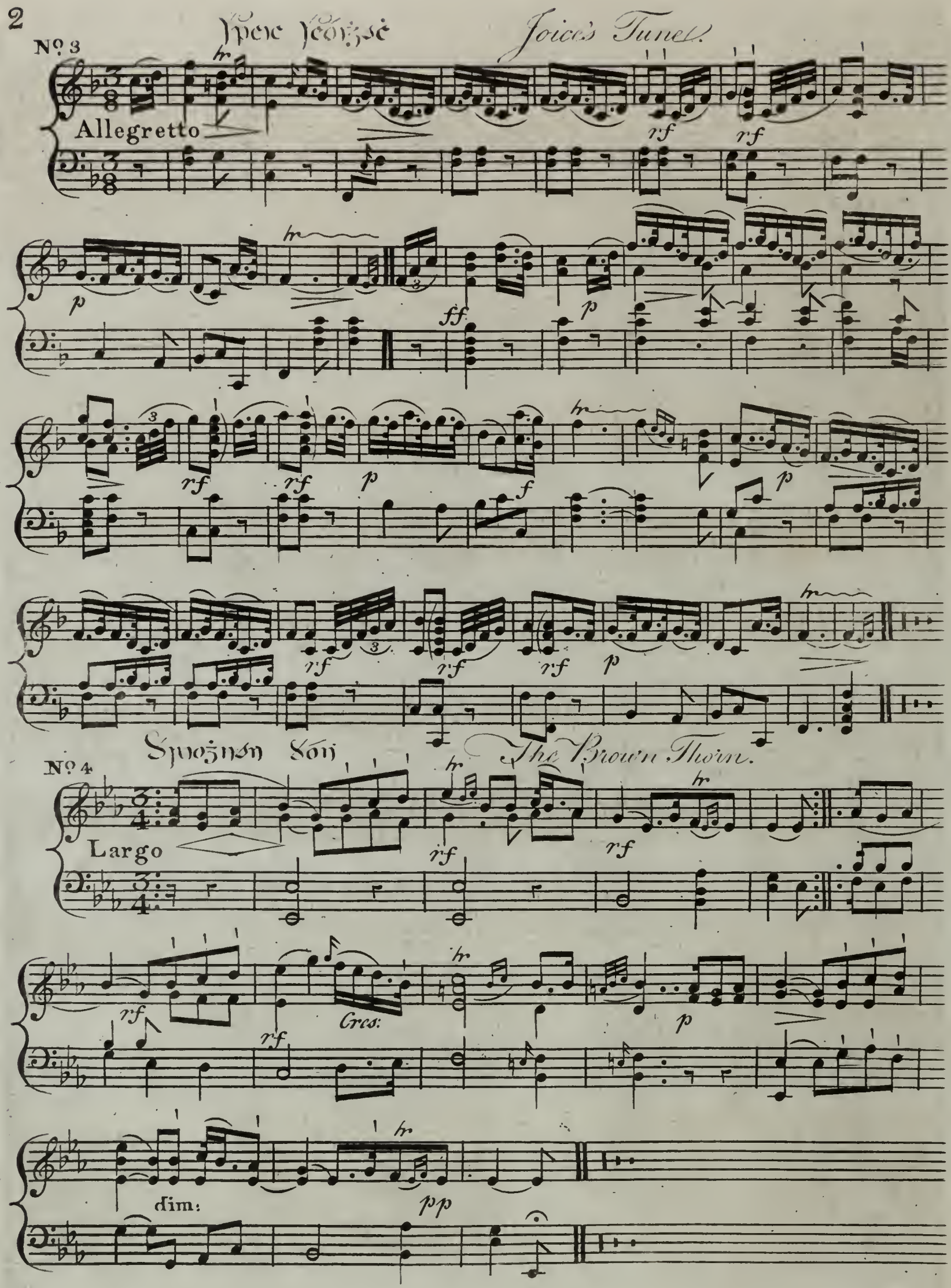
extreme improbability of its being *borrowed* by the ancient Iriſh, from a country that has no national Muſic of its own (the Welſh excepted) is ſufficiently evident. The devoted attachment to their own Muſic, and the praiſes it received from other countries; their ignorance of the Engliſh language, and their rooted averſion to their invaders, were effectual bars to any ſuch plagiariſm or adoption.

The air of *Ad ccoigreac 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 they 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 the Iriſh harp, but from ſongſters; and therefore as they now ſtand, are not always adapted to that inſtrument.

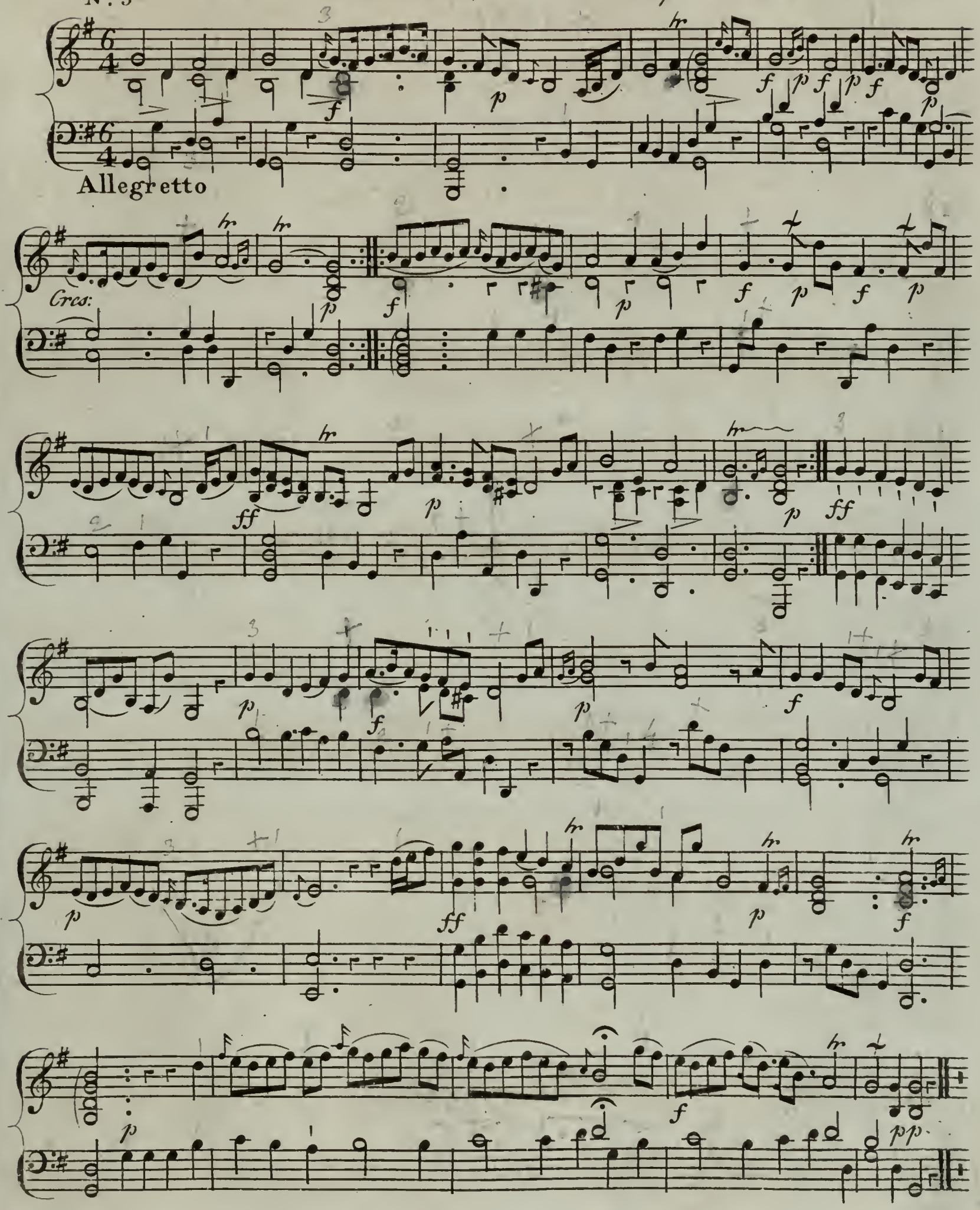
We cannot conclude without ſeriouſly urging gentlemen in the ſouthern parts of Ireland, to follow the example of the Belfaſt Society, by promoting ſimilar meetings of the harpers in their reſpective provinces. It is a debt which every man owes to his country, to ſearch for and perpetuate the records of other days, to oppoſe, as far as he can, the deſtructive ravages of time, and to render permanent the fleeting productions of every ſpecies of genius; productions of an era ſo remote in the preſent caſe, as to baffle our attempts to aſcertain their exact ſtation on the ſcale of events. 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.


Nº 1
If to a Foreign Clime you go
Adagio
dim
Cres:
dim:
Nº 2
The Foxes Sleep
Moderato
Cres:


Nº 3
Joice's Tune.
Allegretto
Nº 4
The Brown Thorn.
Largo
Cres:
dim:

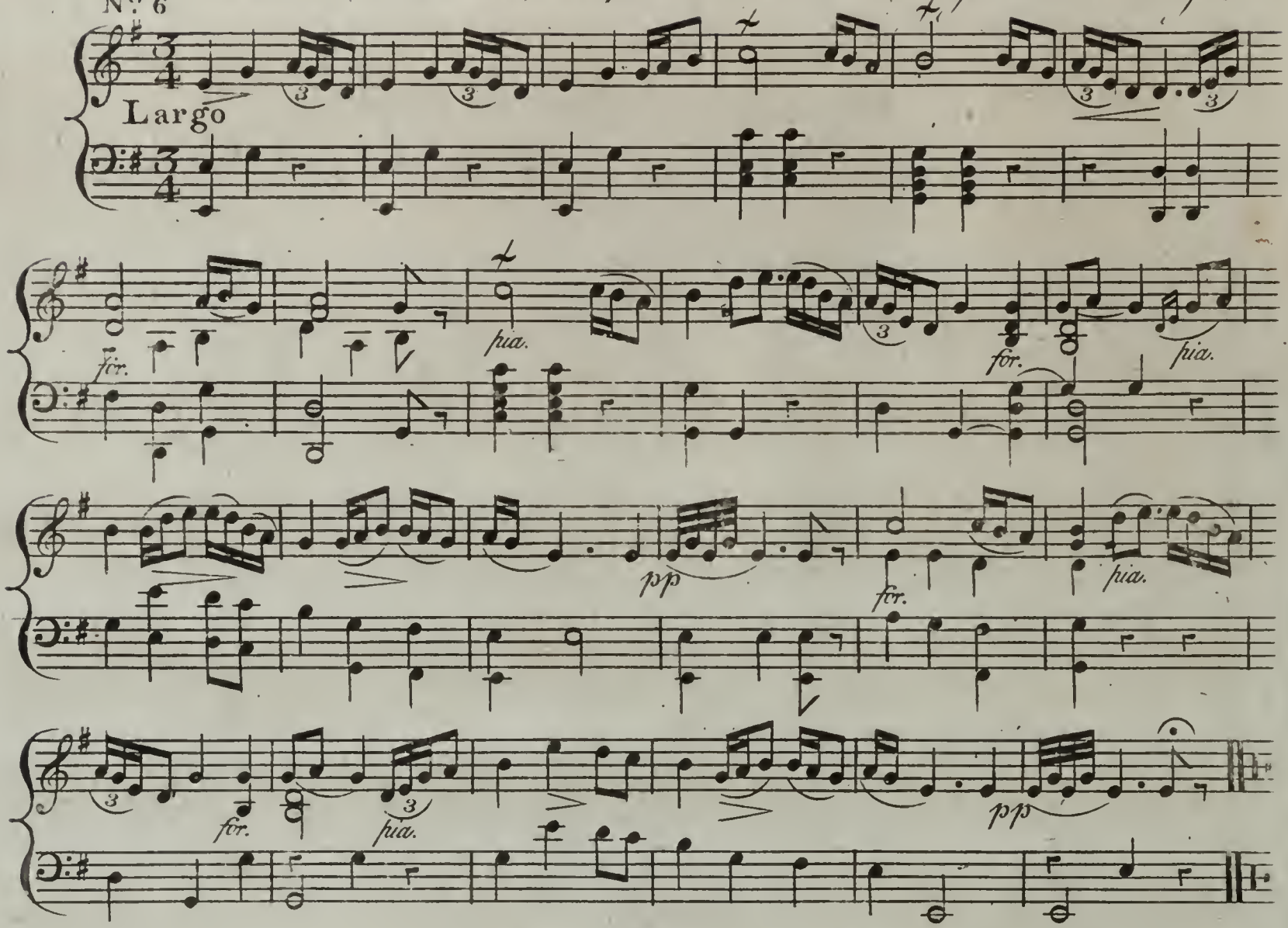
Besn juz ns vibpsch Fairy Queen — Carolan.

No. 5



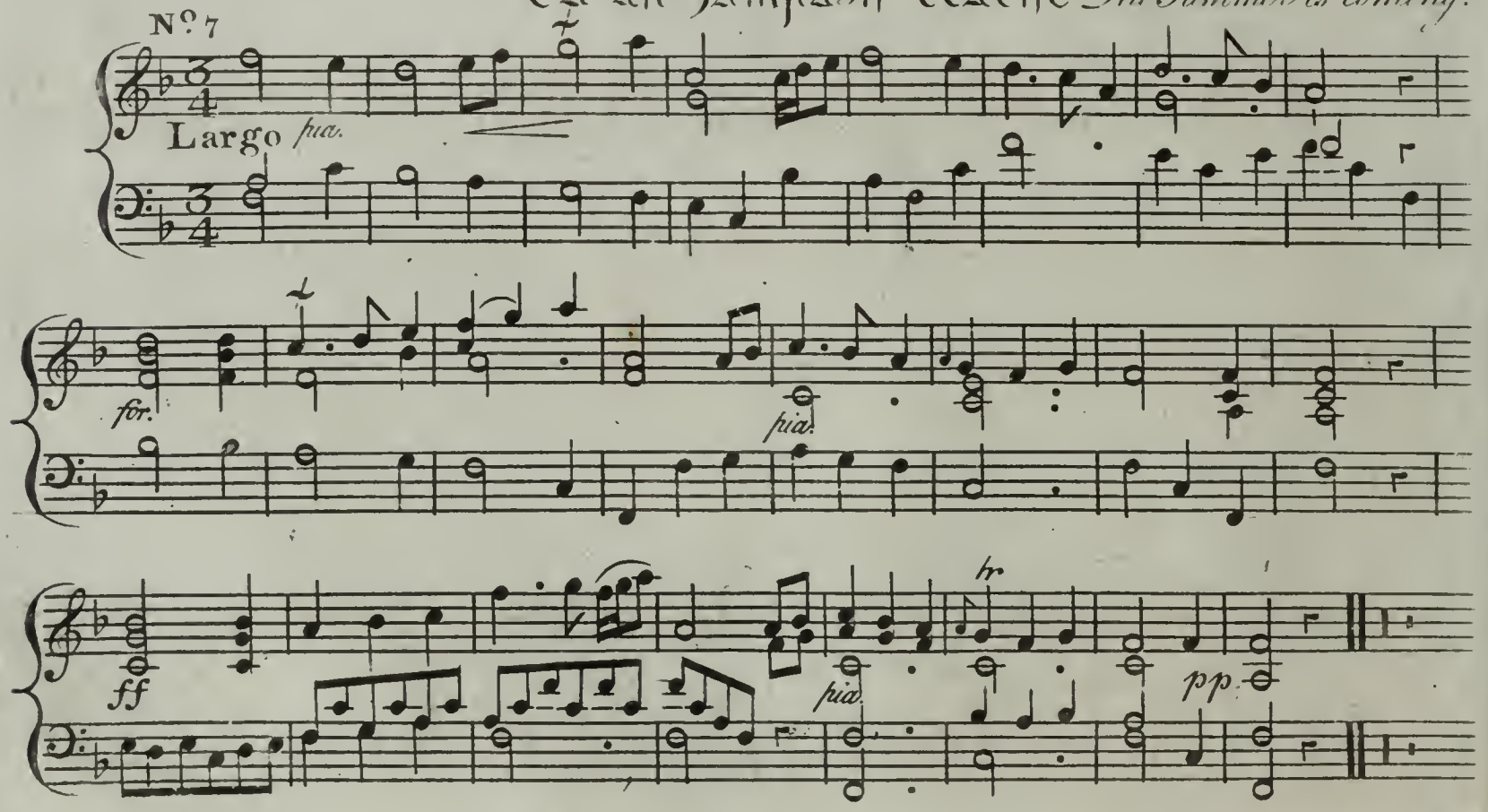
Girls have you seen George.

No. 6



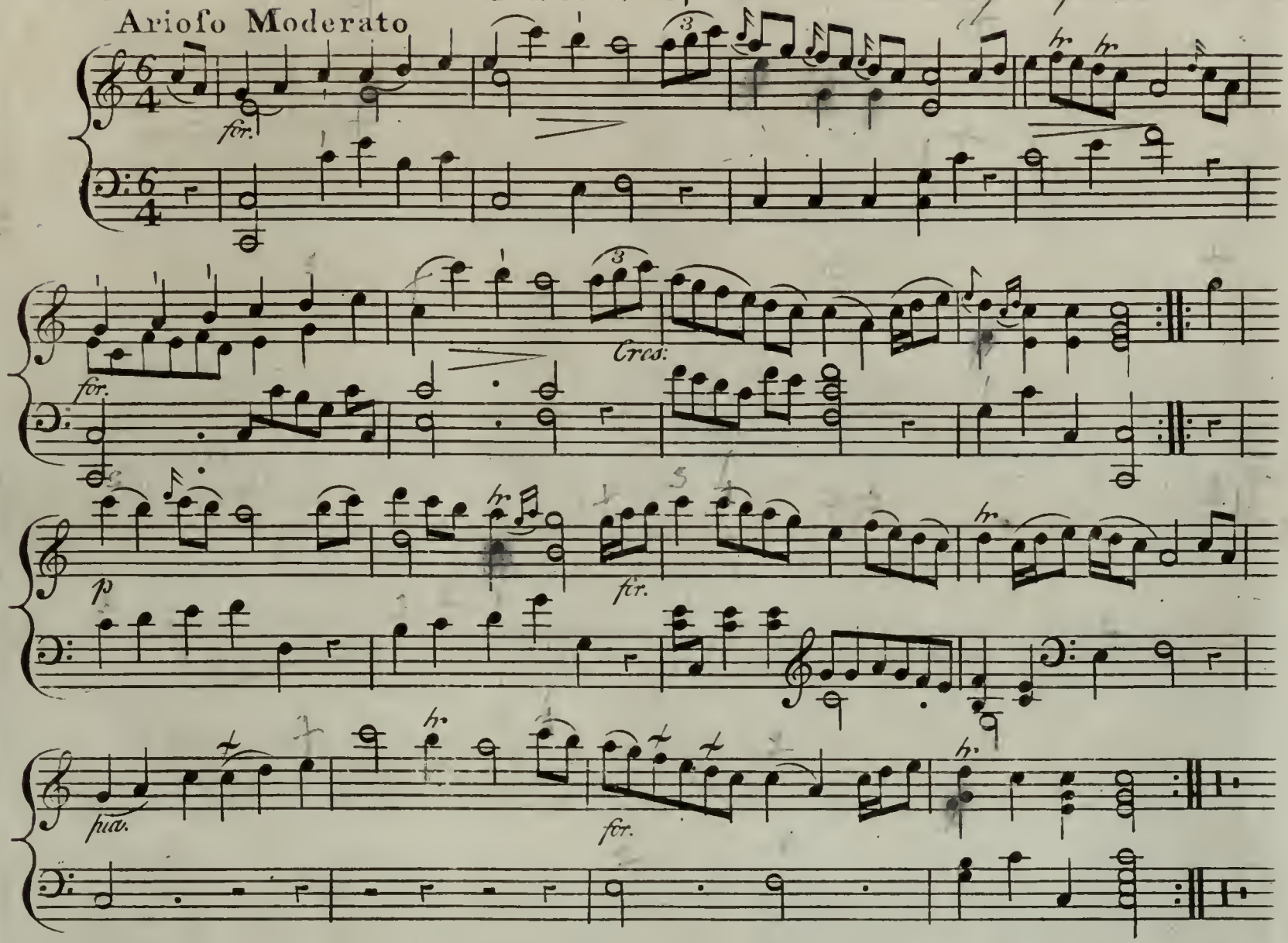
The Summer is coming.

No. 7

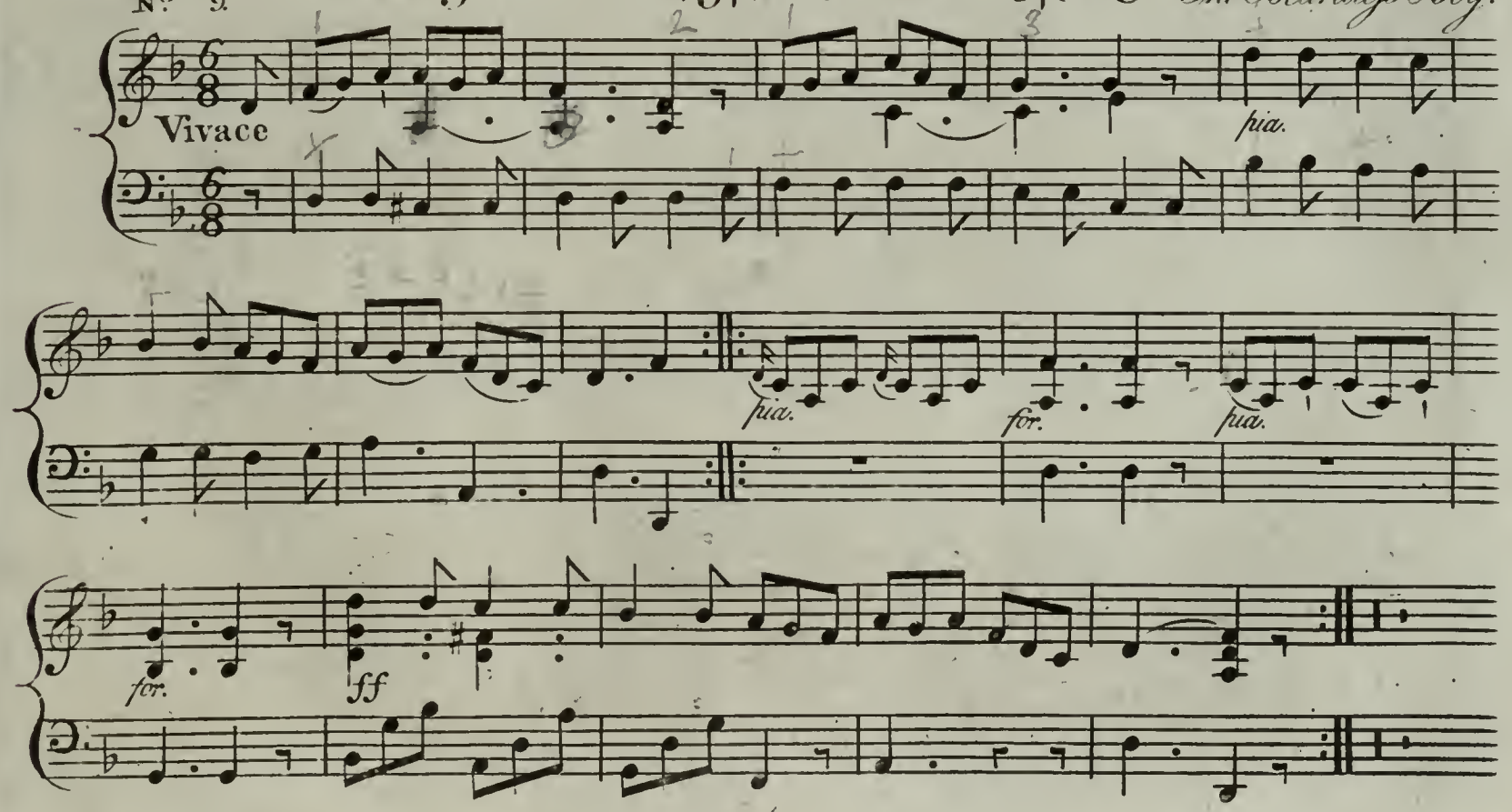


Nº 8. Cathin Tyrrel — Kitty Tyrrel.

Arioso Moderato

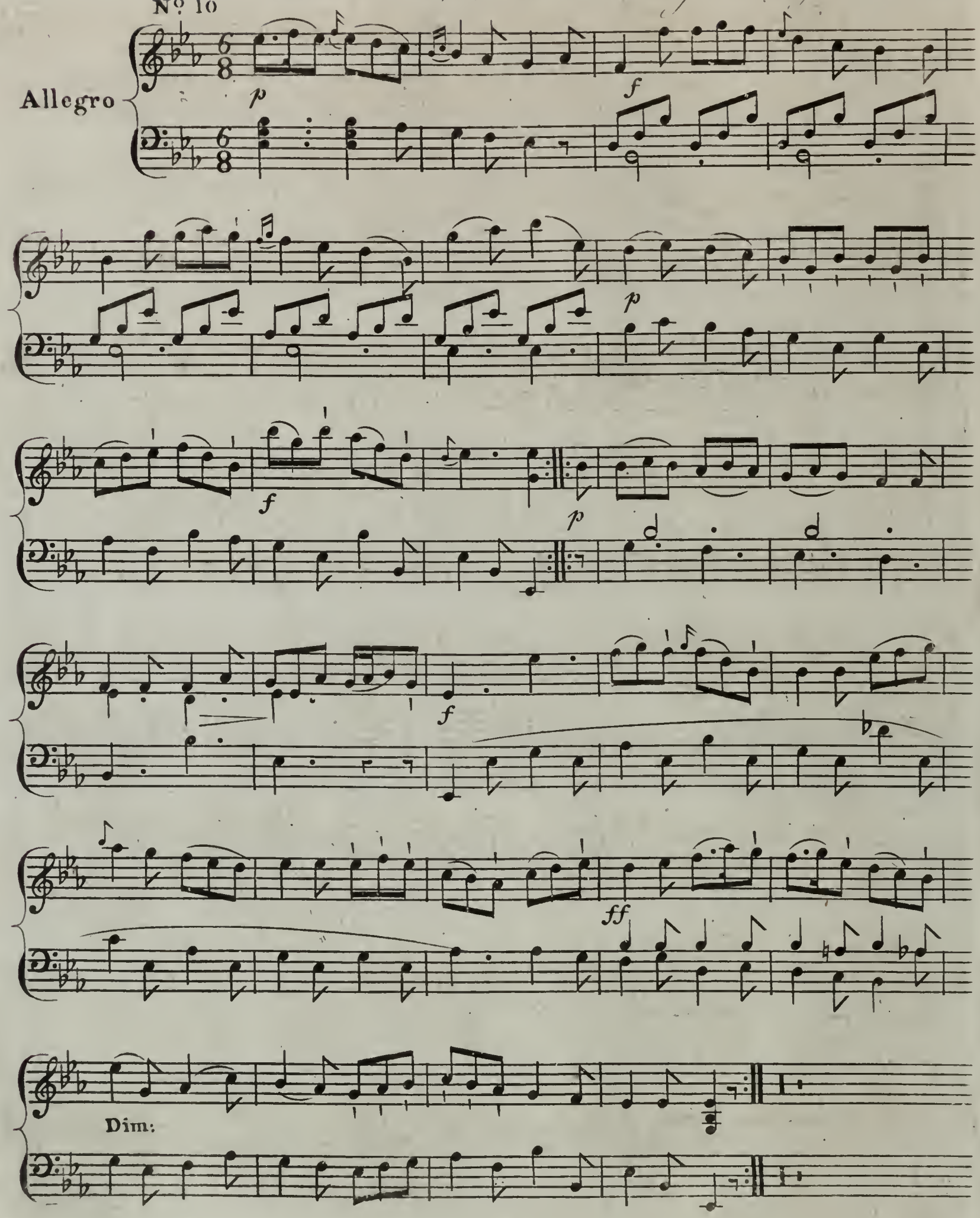


Nº 9. A Zilla na Szpirb anantpat — The Beardless Boy.



Planxty Drury — Carolan.

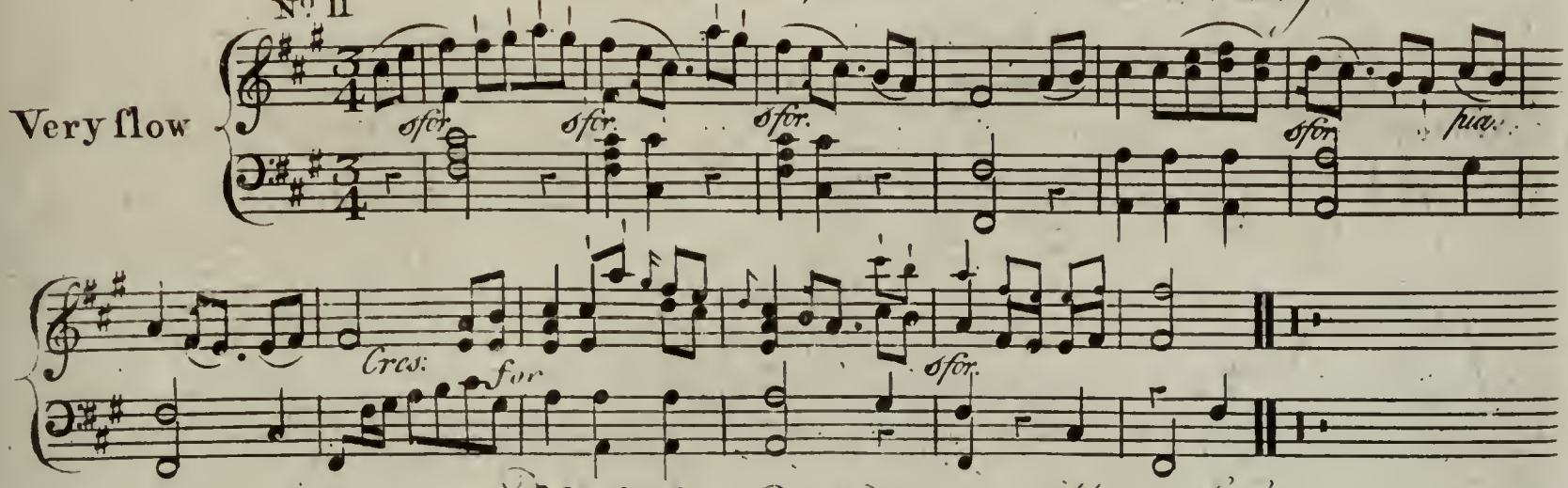
Nº 10



Old Truagh.

No. 11

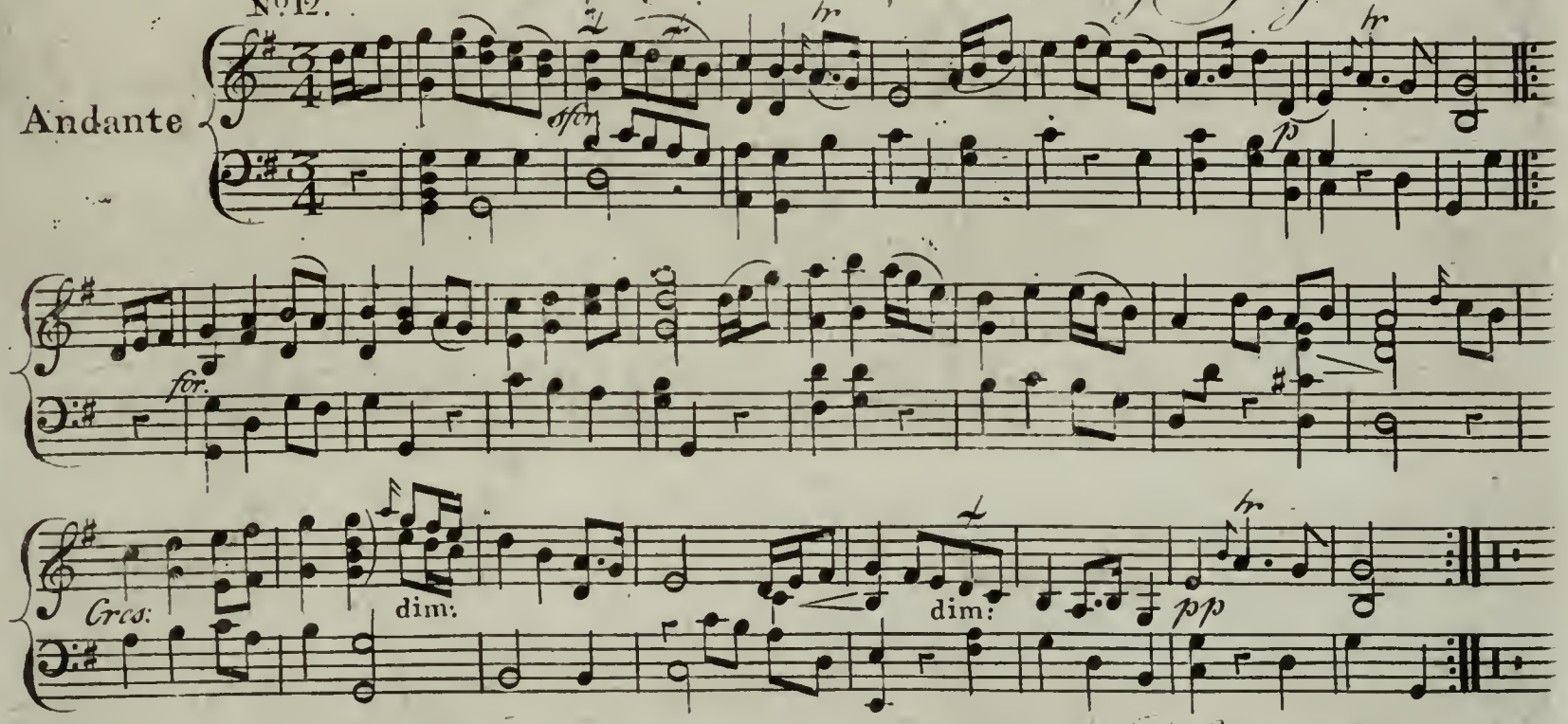
Very slow



Molly St. George — Conalon.

No. 12.

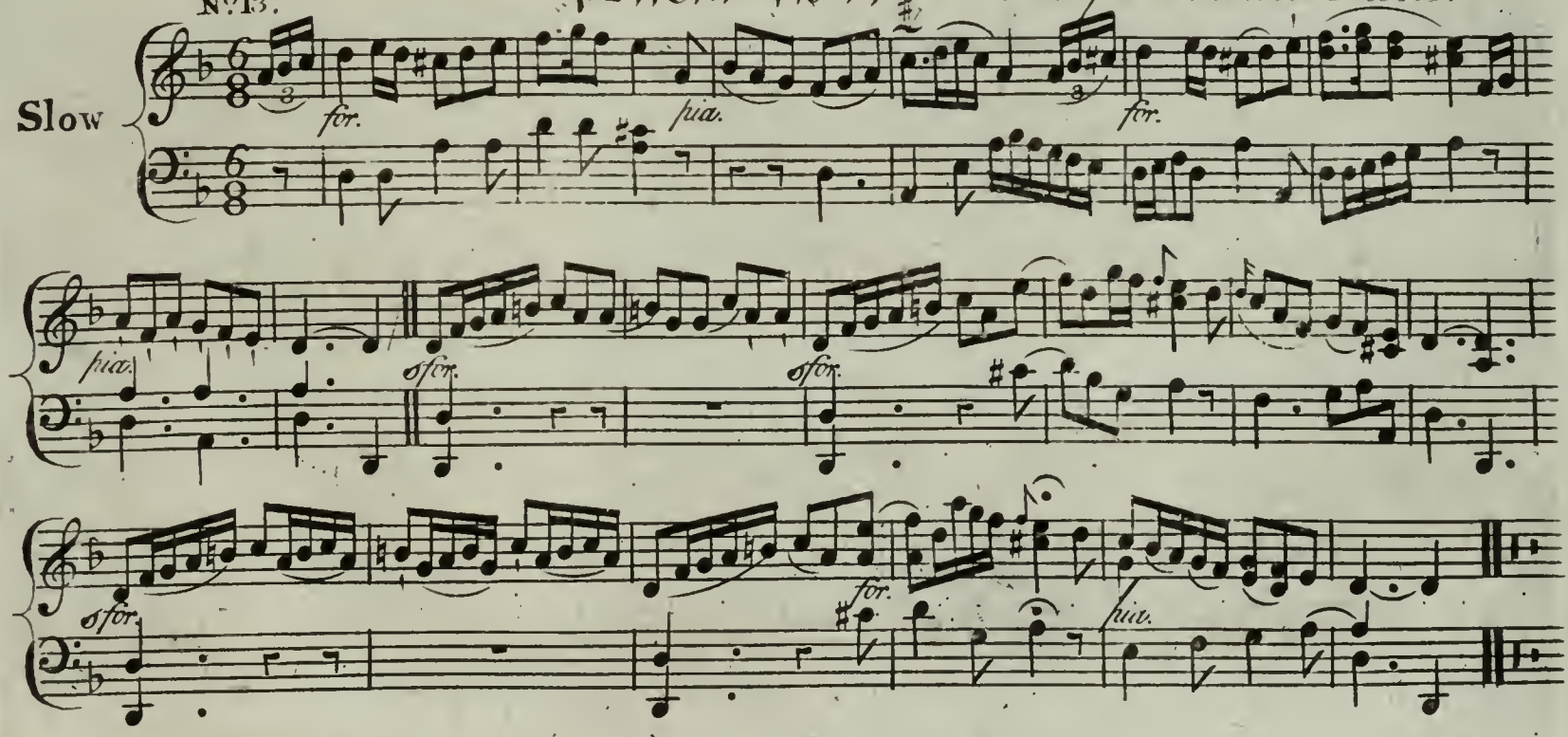
Andante



The fair-haired Child.

No. 13.

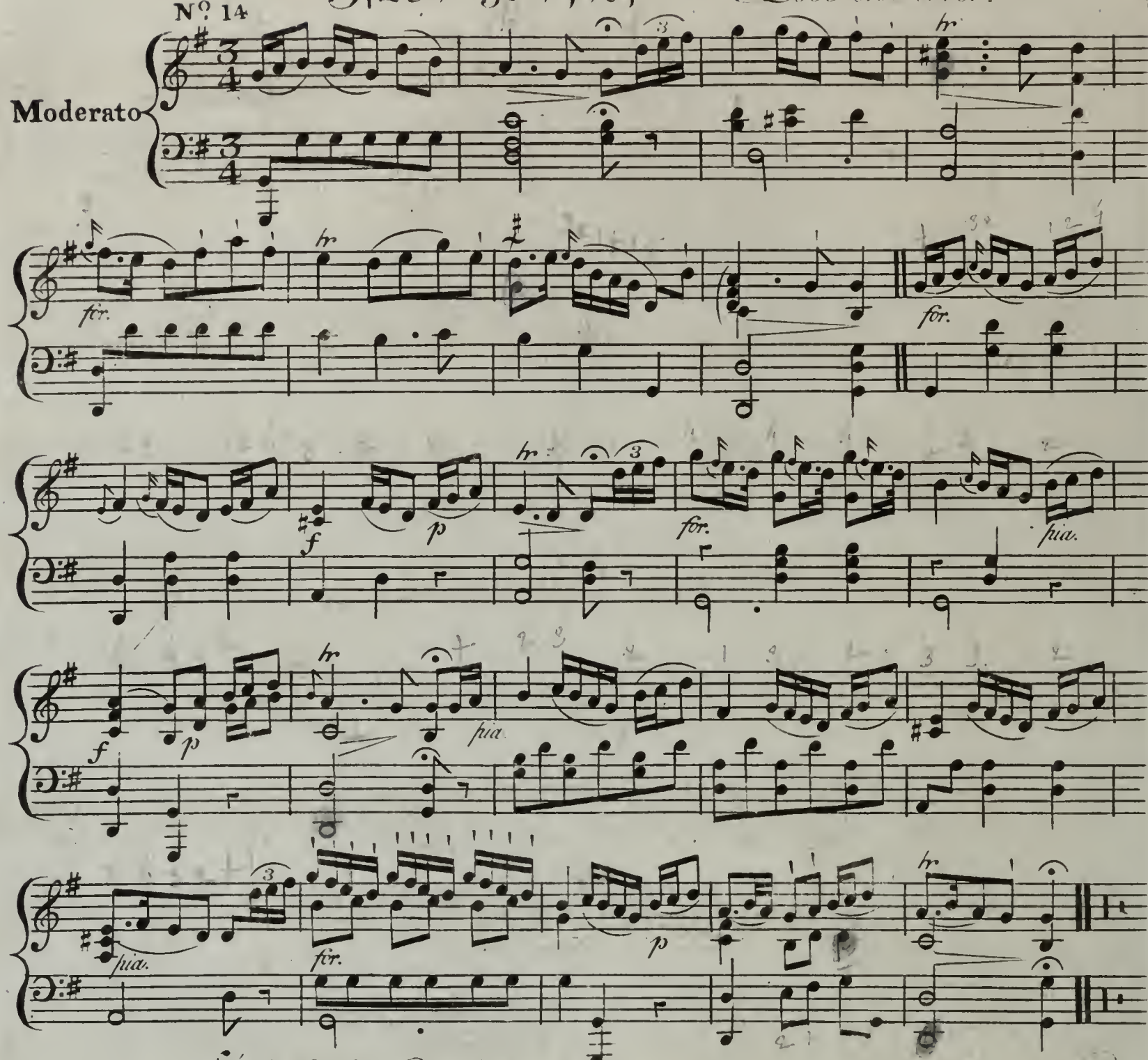
Slow



Love in Secret.

No. 14

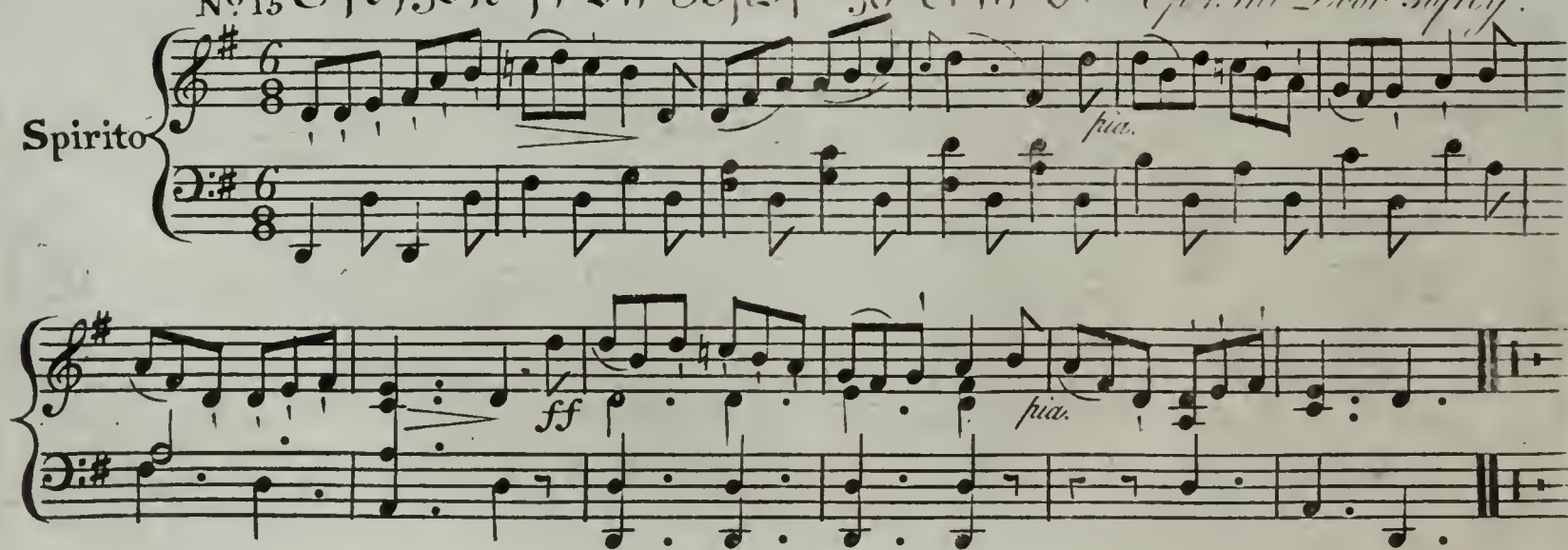
Moderato



No. 15

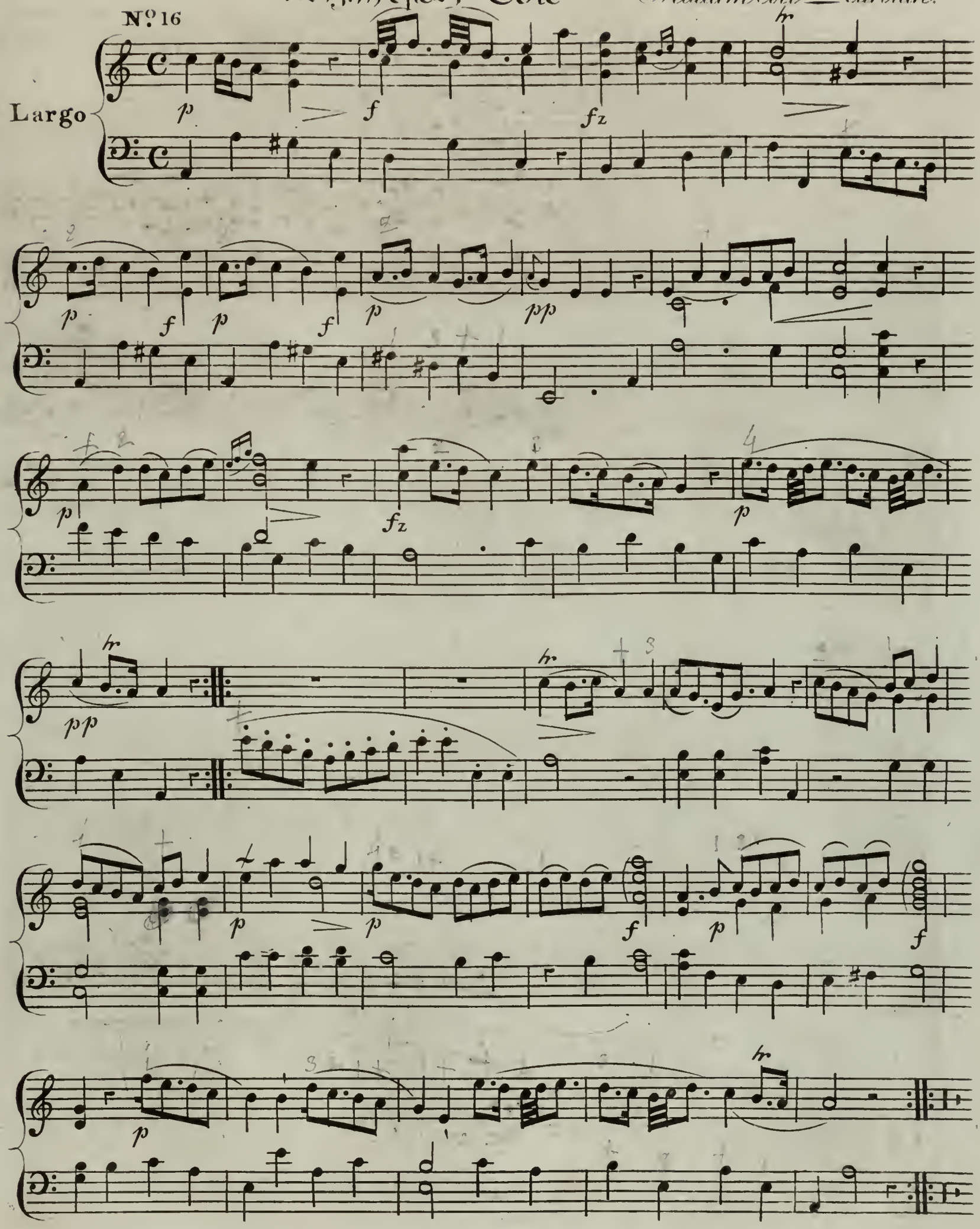
Open the Door softly.

Spirito



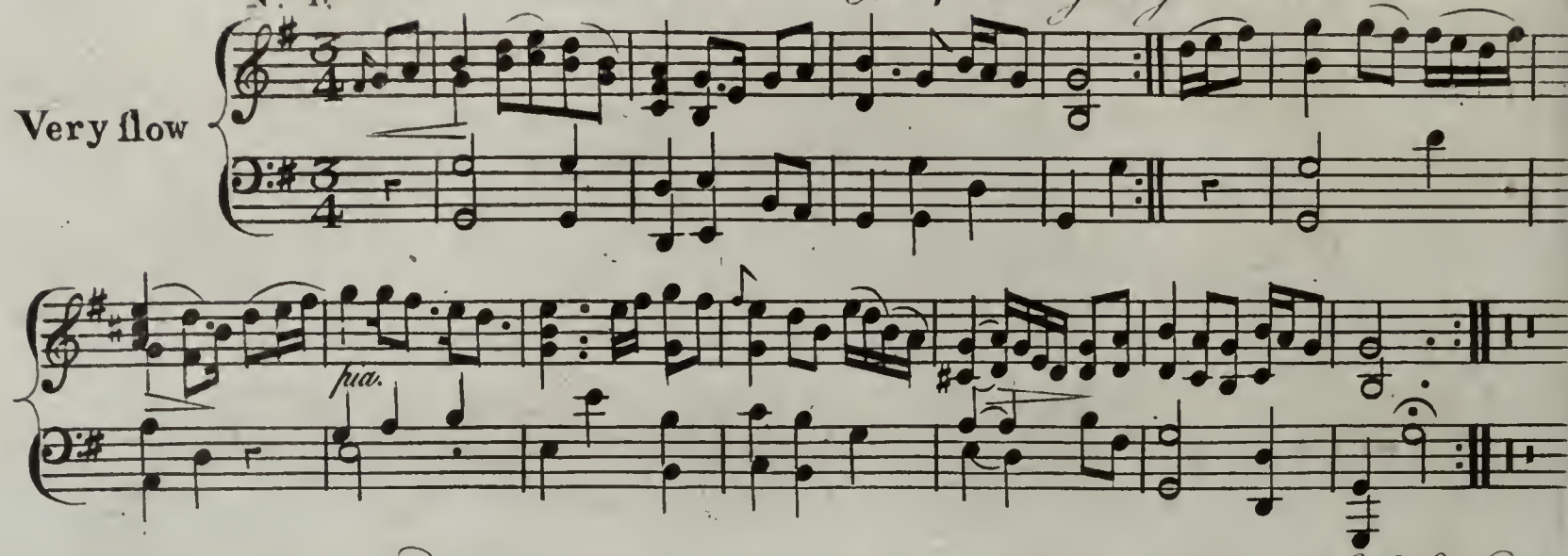
Vszhytpesy Cole

Madam Cole — Carolan.



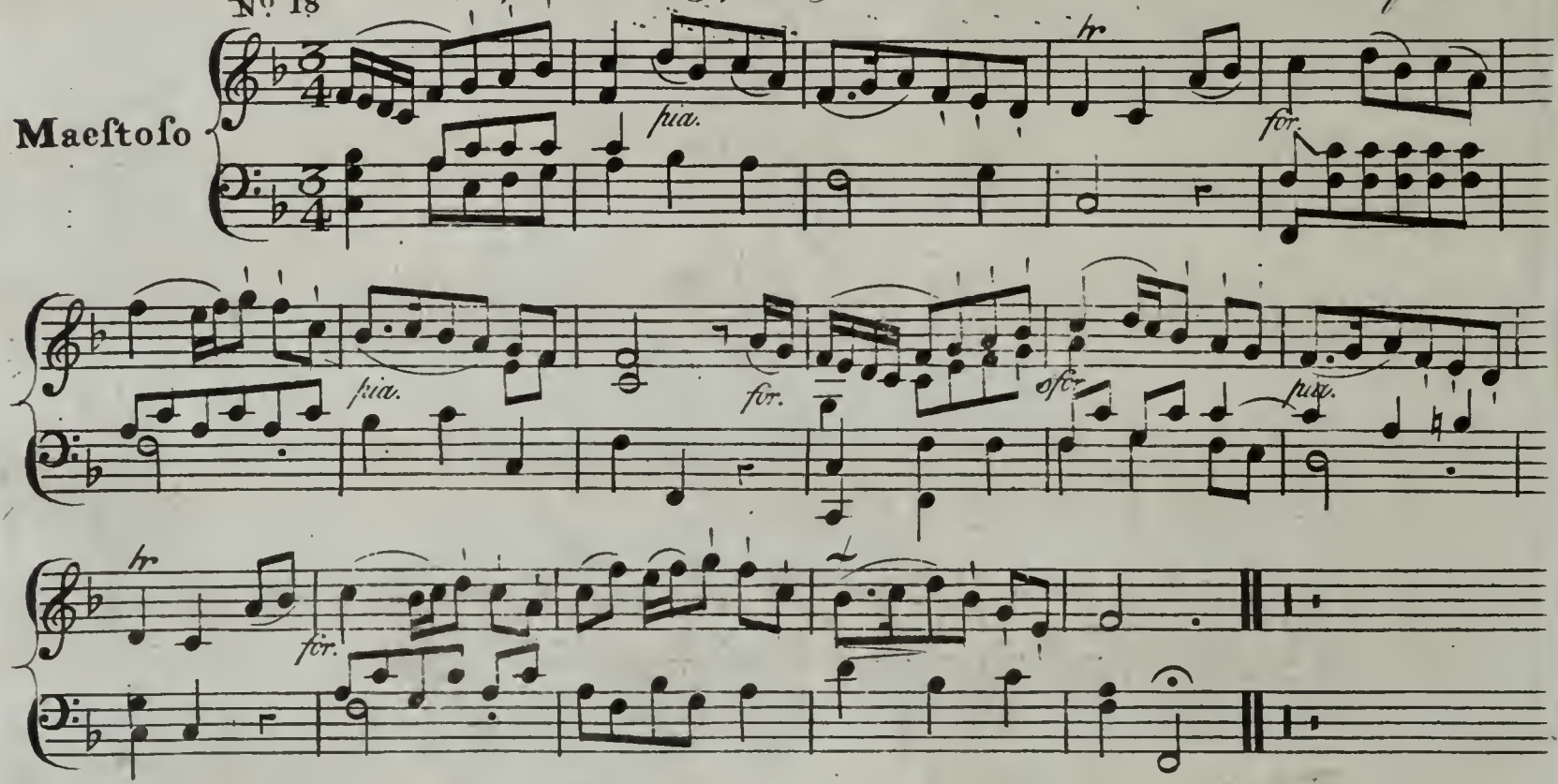
Dyleen on oizfeep *The Young Mans Dream.*

No. 17



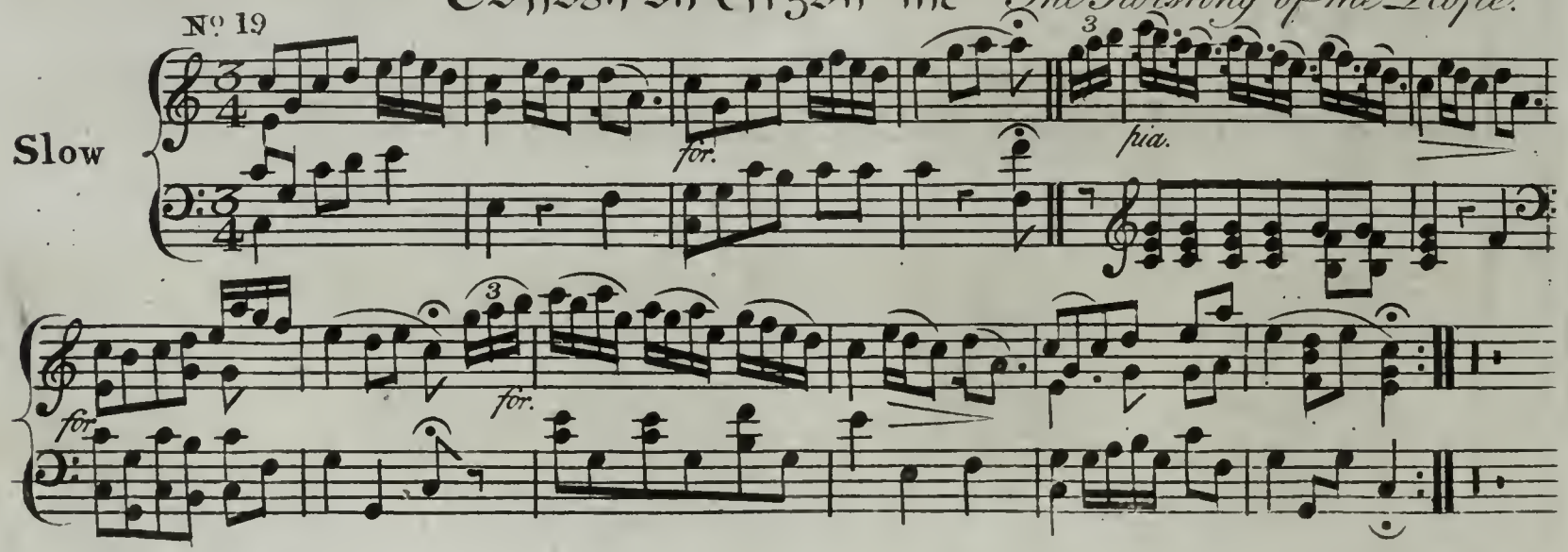
Nrpnin ns zprsize bsne *The Charmer with the fair Locks.*

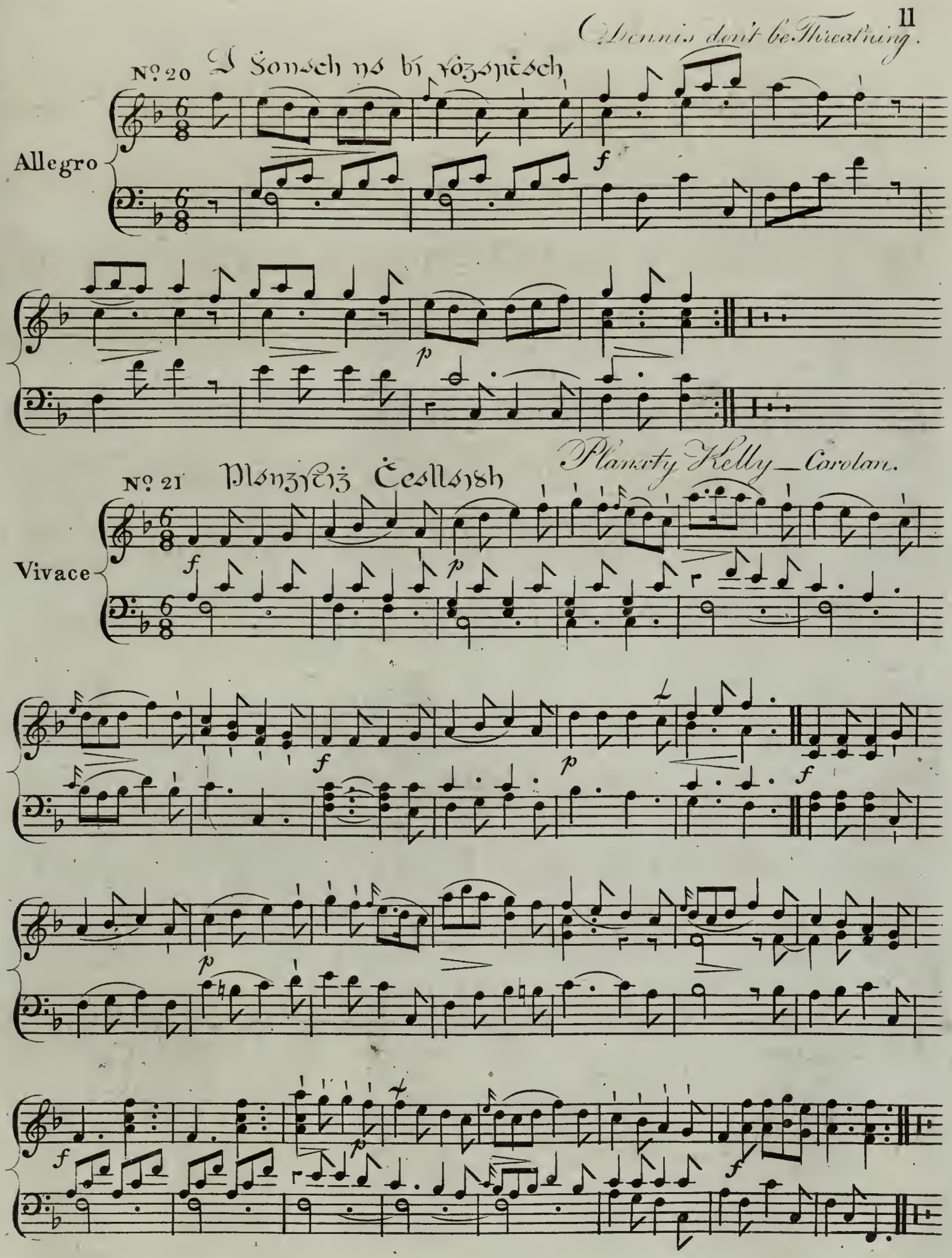
No. 18

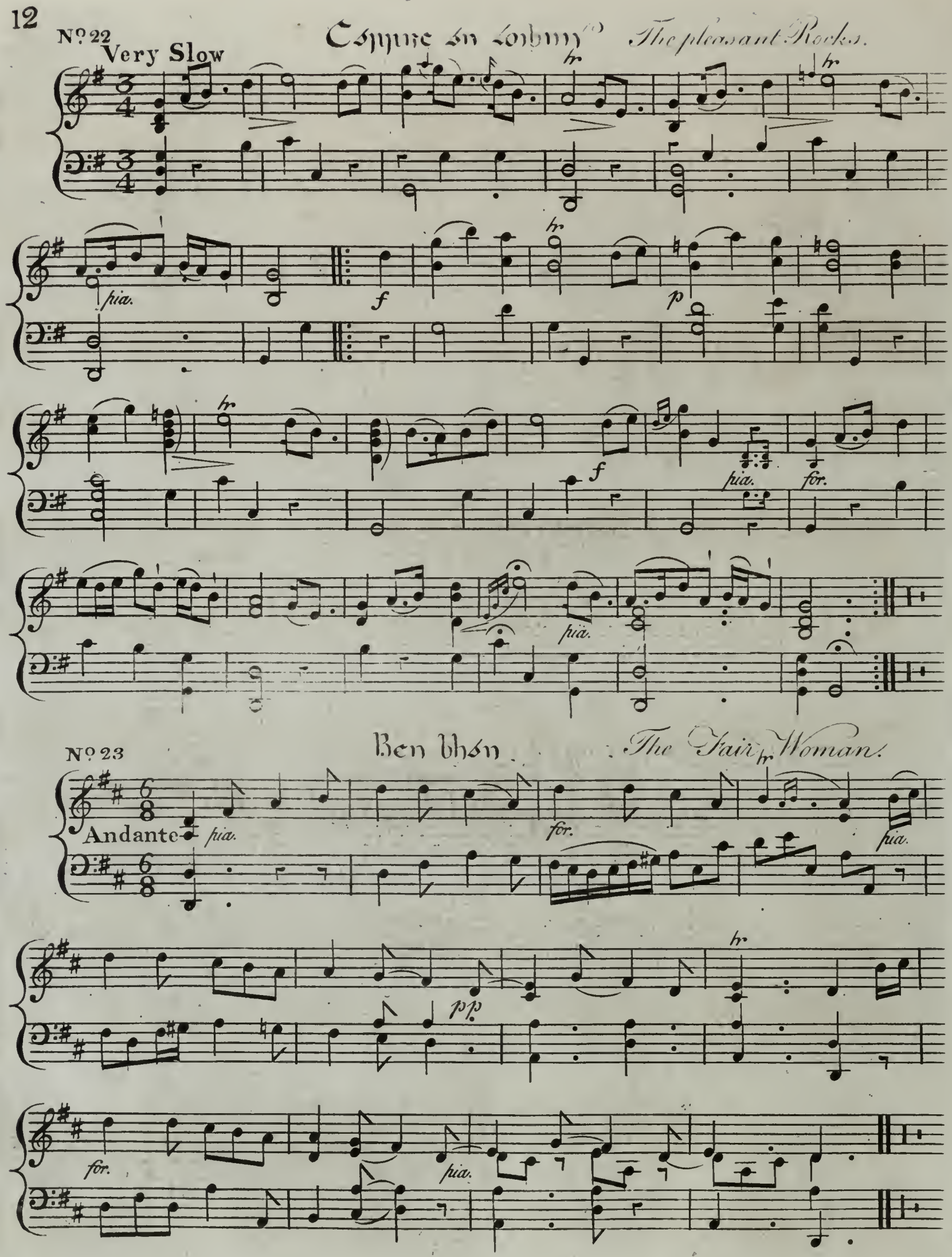


Cossosh on tsrzon me *The Twisting of the Rope.*

No. 19



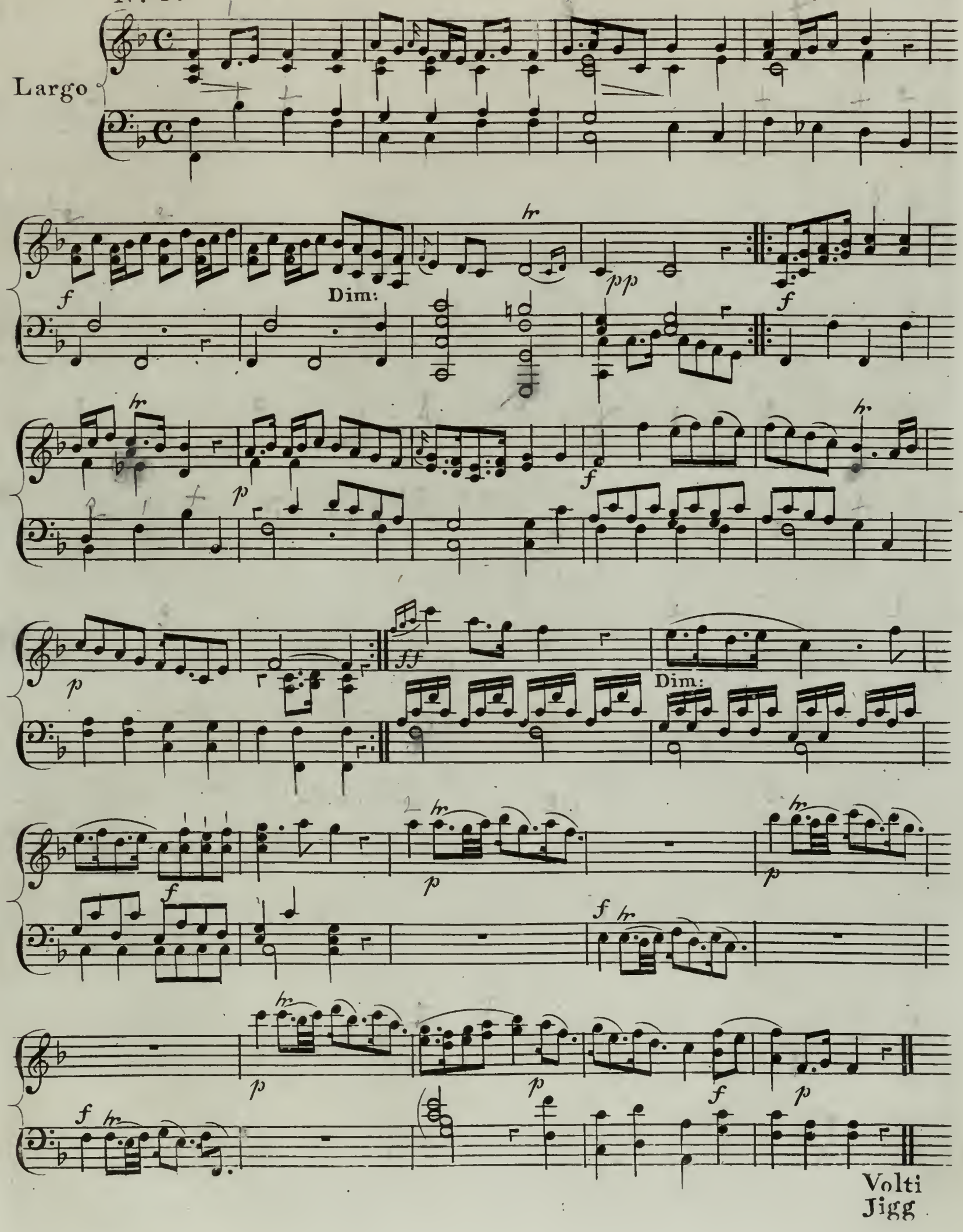

Dennis don't be Threatning.
No. 20
Allegro
No. 21
Planxty Kelly — Carolan.
Vivace


No. 22
Very Slow
The pleasant Rocks.
pia.
f
p
f
pia.
for.
pia.
No. 23
Ben bhon
The Fair Woman.
Andante
pia.
for.
pia.
pp
for.
pia.

Nº 24

Row Sillorn

Rose Dillon — Carolan.



Jigg

Vivace

ff

Dim:

f p f p f p

The Parting of Friends.

No. 25

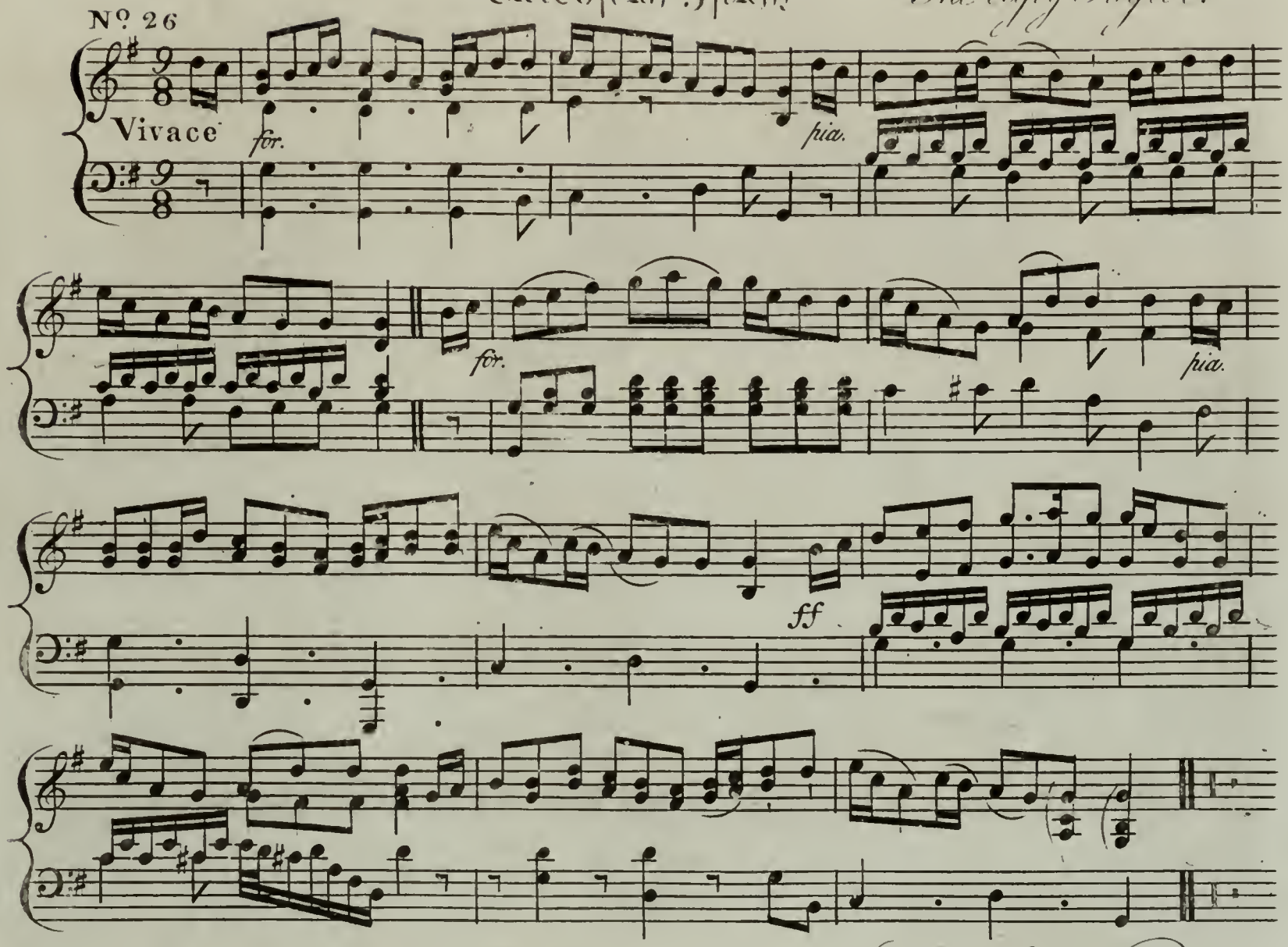
Andante

f p

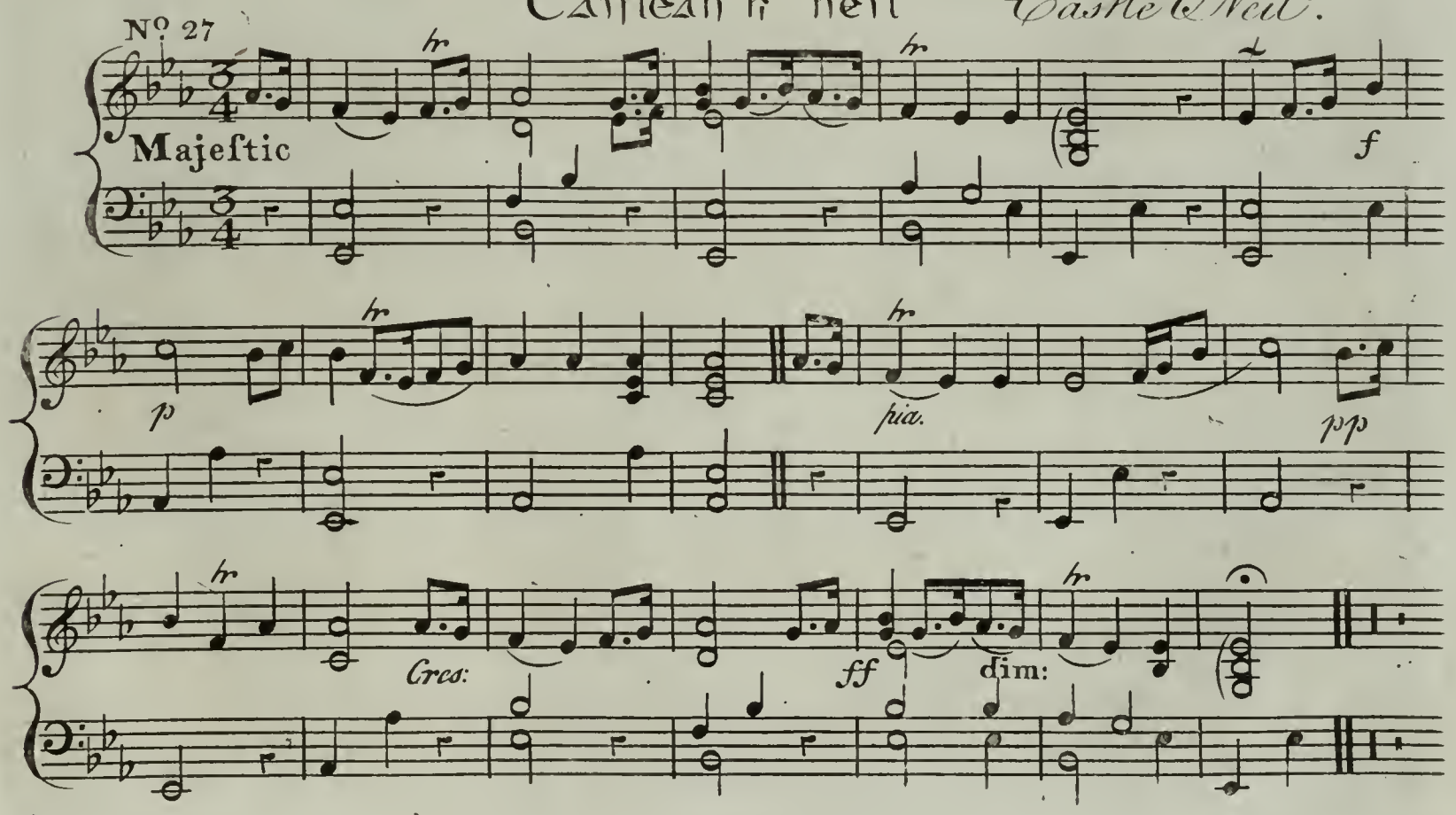
hr

Cres: Dim:

Taleoran zpam — The Ugly Taylor.

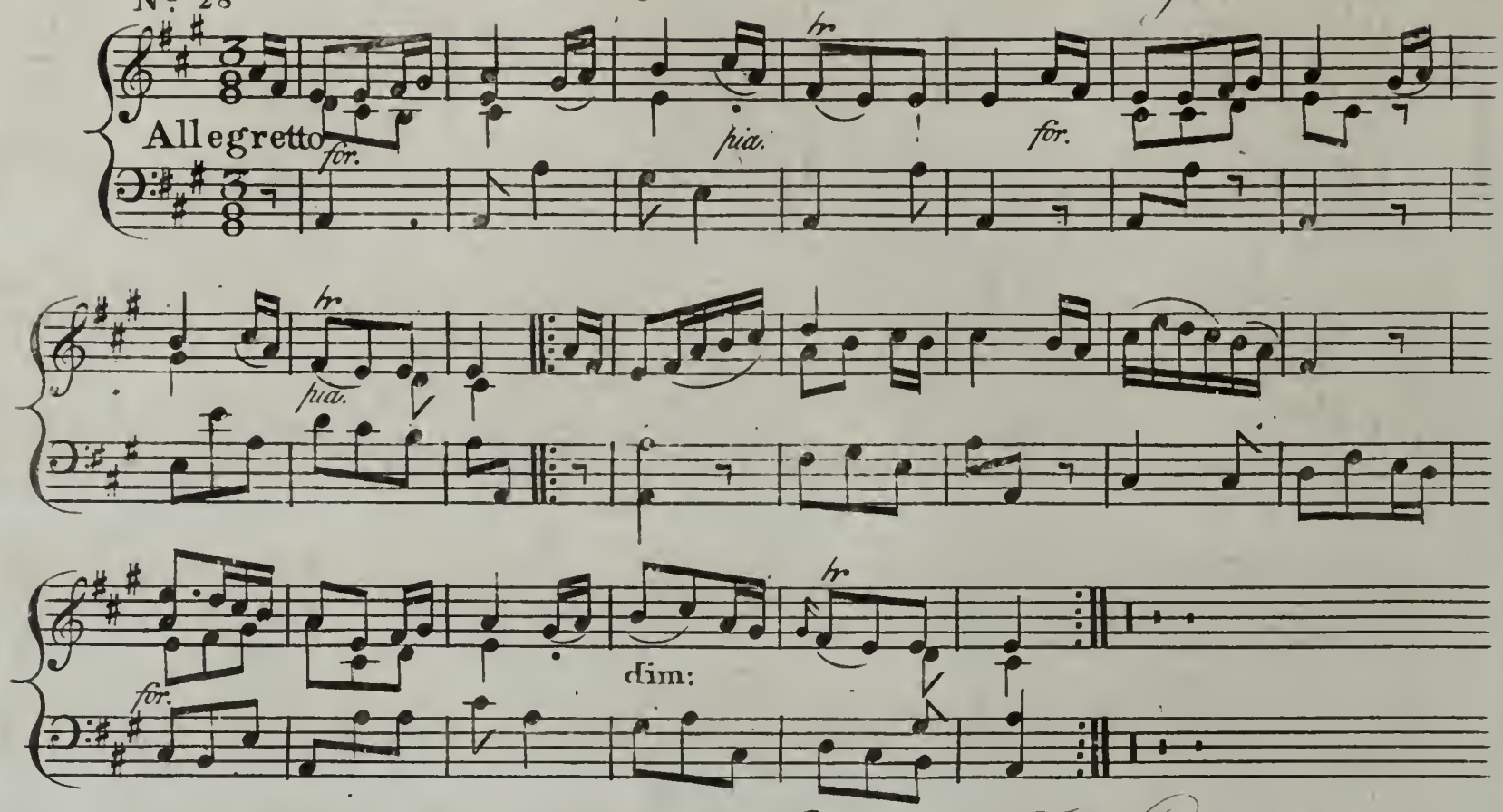


Canſean n neil — Castle O'Neil.



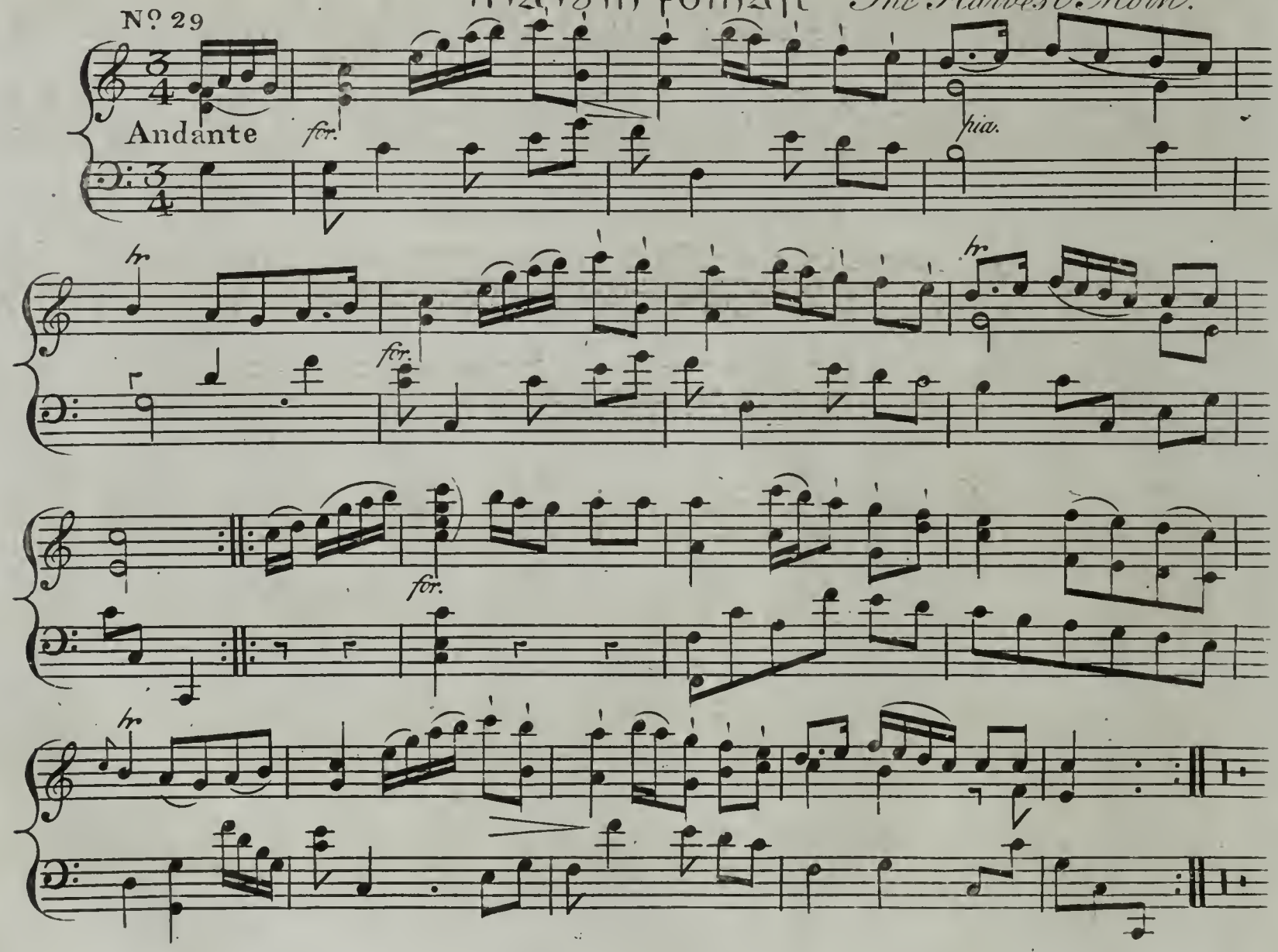
Cavizh na ccrach *Kitty the Cuckoo.*

Nº 28



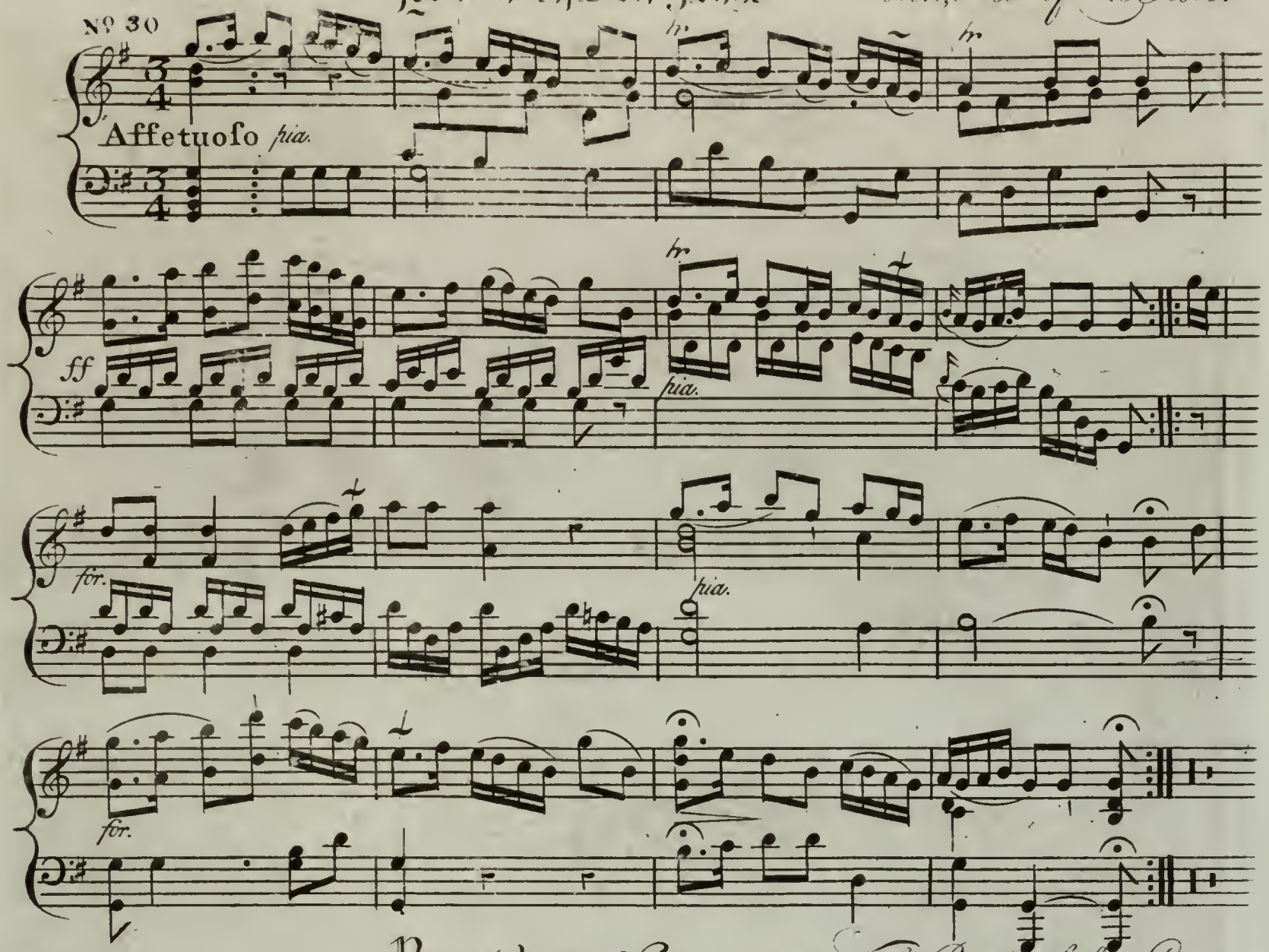
Maidin foman *The Harvest Morn.*

Nº 29



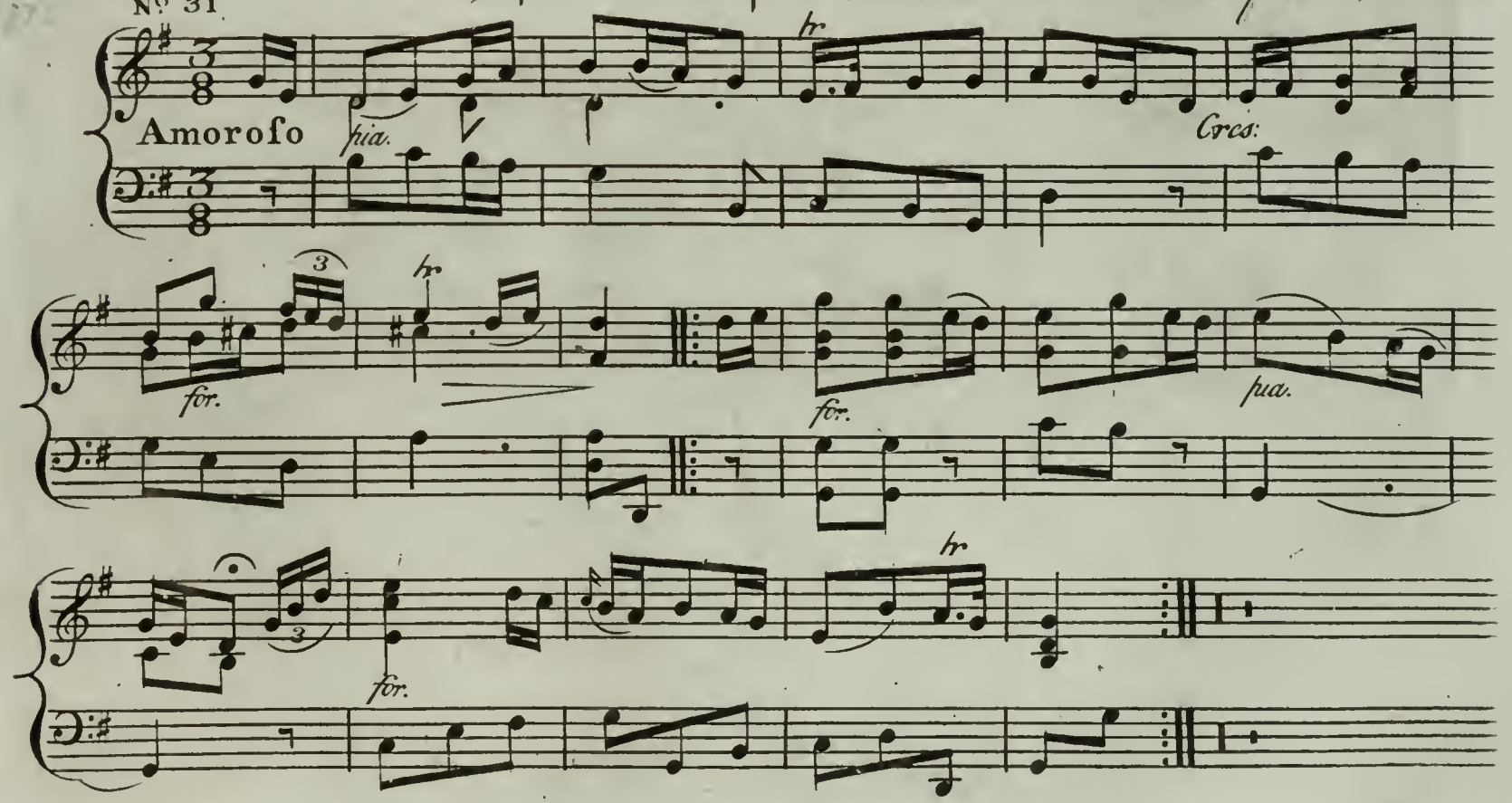
Yeon in eme an zlanne — John, Heir of the Glen.

Nº 30



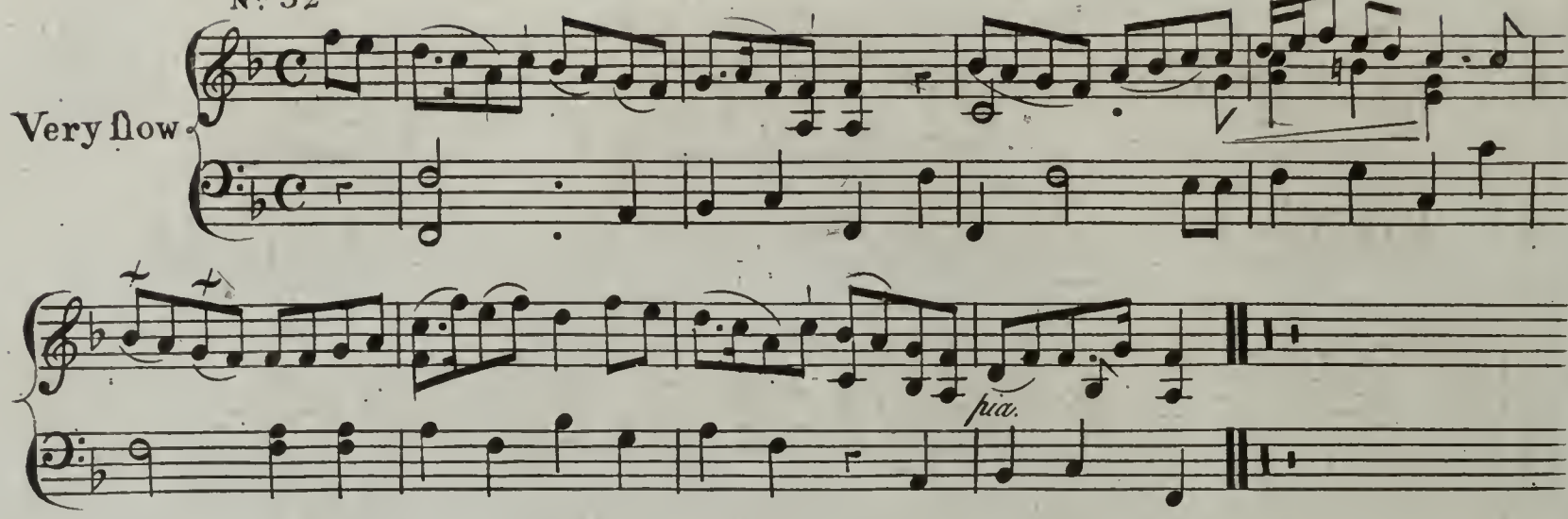
Burach na Yeanonne — The Banks of the Shannon

Nº 31



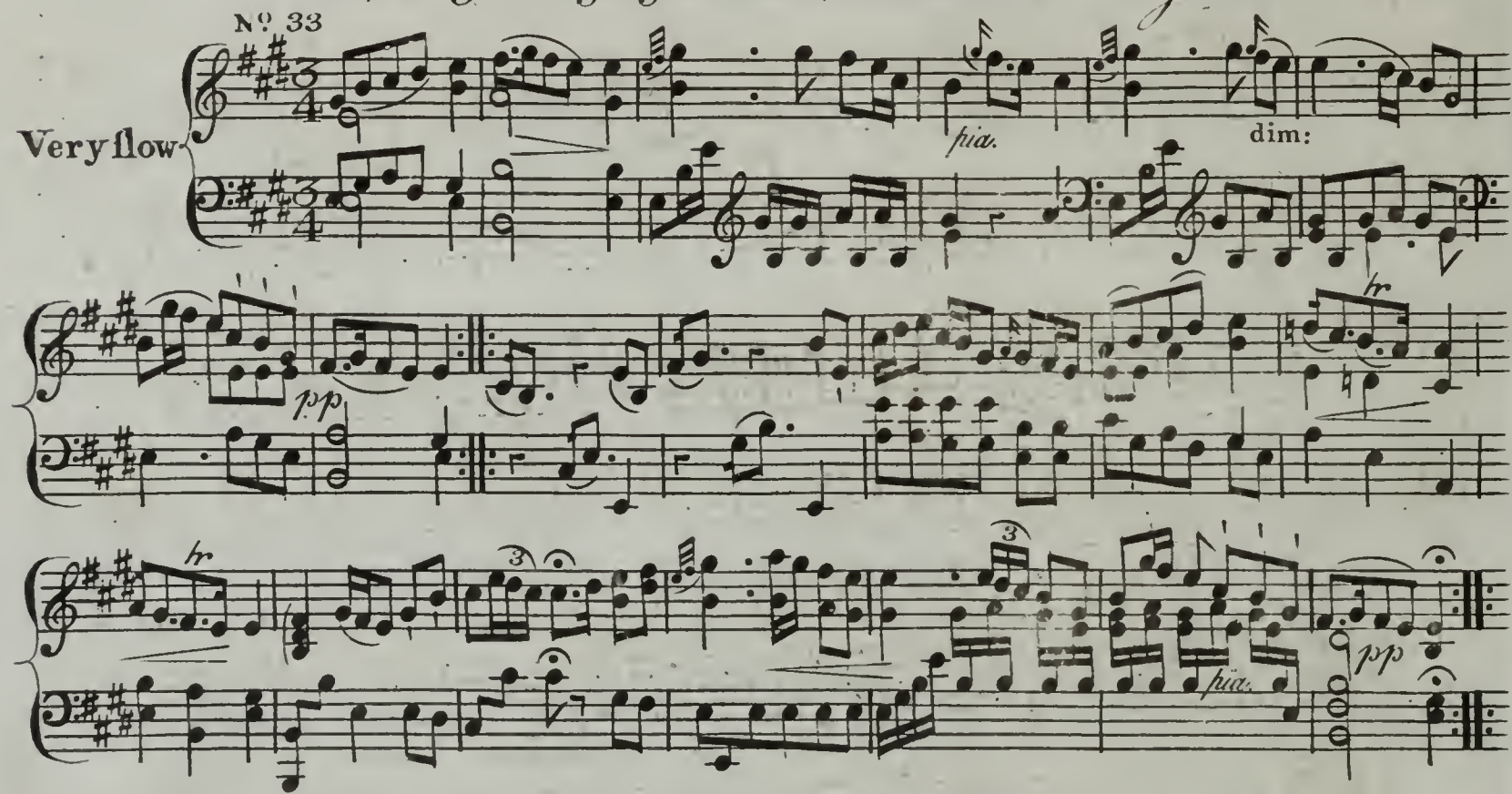
Cailin Dón — The Brown Maid.

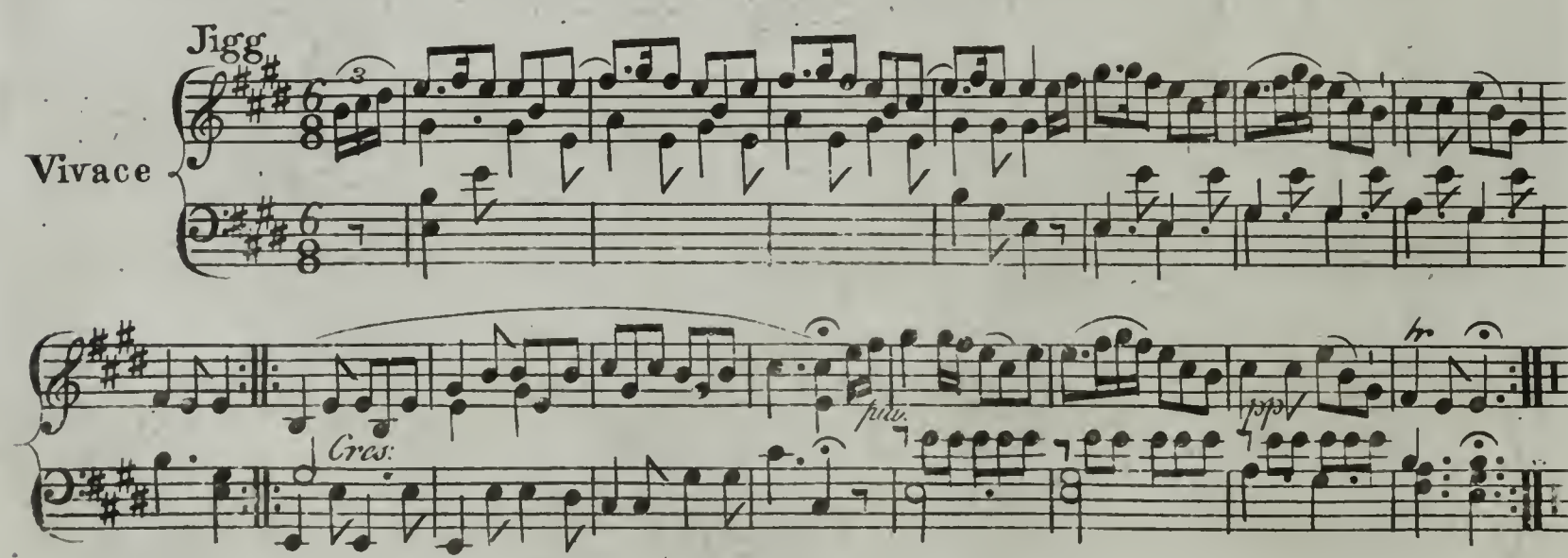
No. 32



Cus Zaddizh Zoid mo Sainte Sam — The Jointure — Conalon.

No. 33





No. 34

Affetuoso

sfor. *pia.* *pia.* *sfor.* *for.* *pia.* *pp* *for.*

No. 35

Andante

for. *pia.* *for.* *sfor.* *pia.* *ff* dim: *pp*

Nº 36

Andante

hr

hr

pia.

for.

hr

pia.

Nº 37.

Larghetto fua.

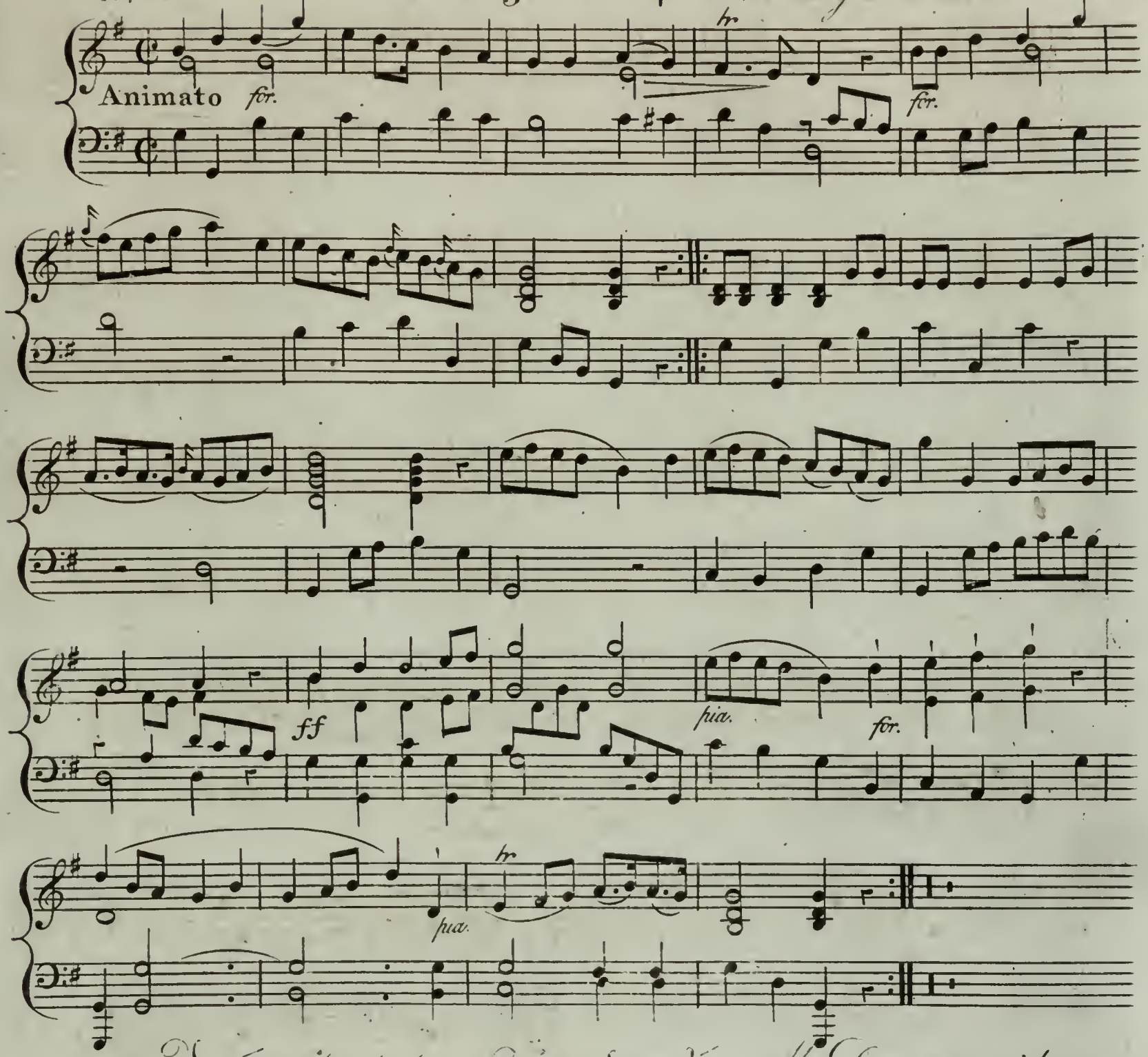
Cres:

for.

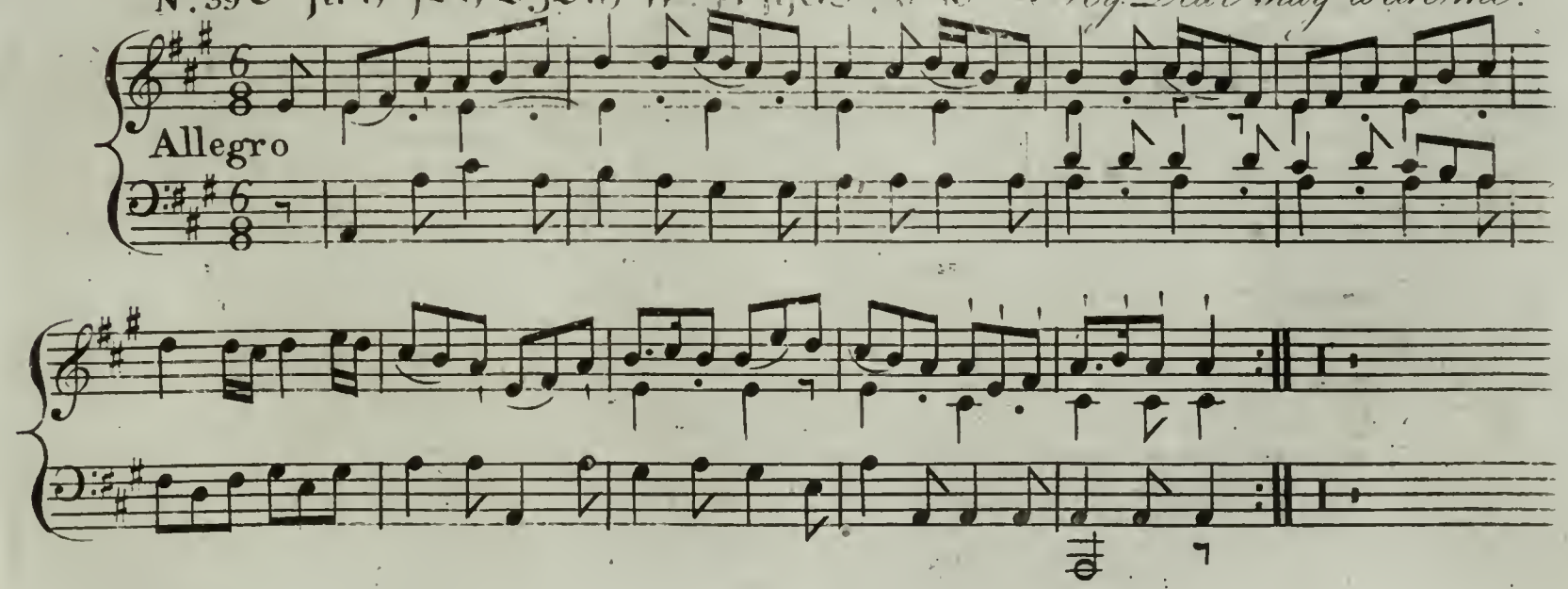
pp

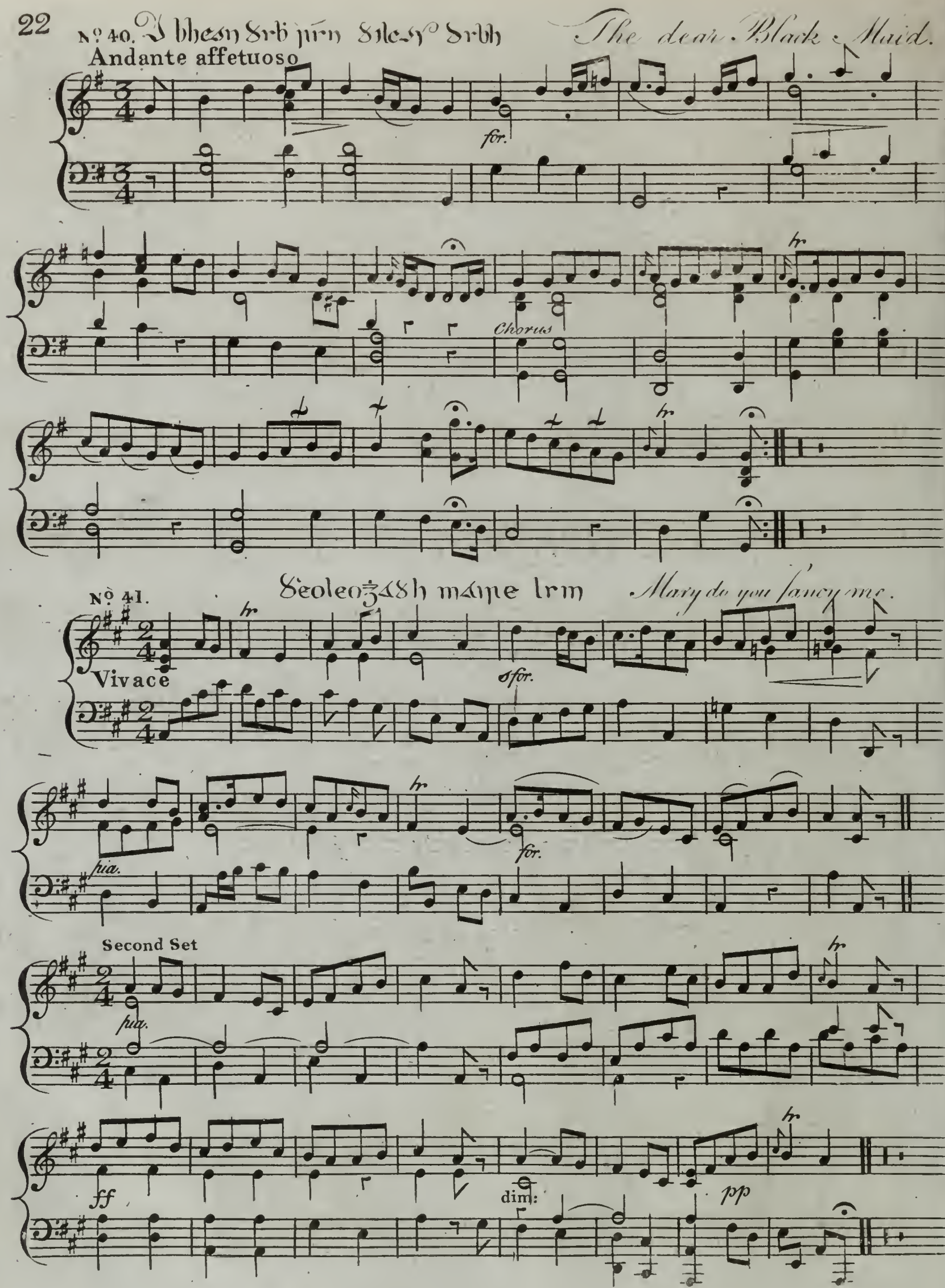
hr

Nº 38 Catizh ni bpian Kitty O'Brian _ Carolan.



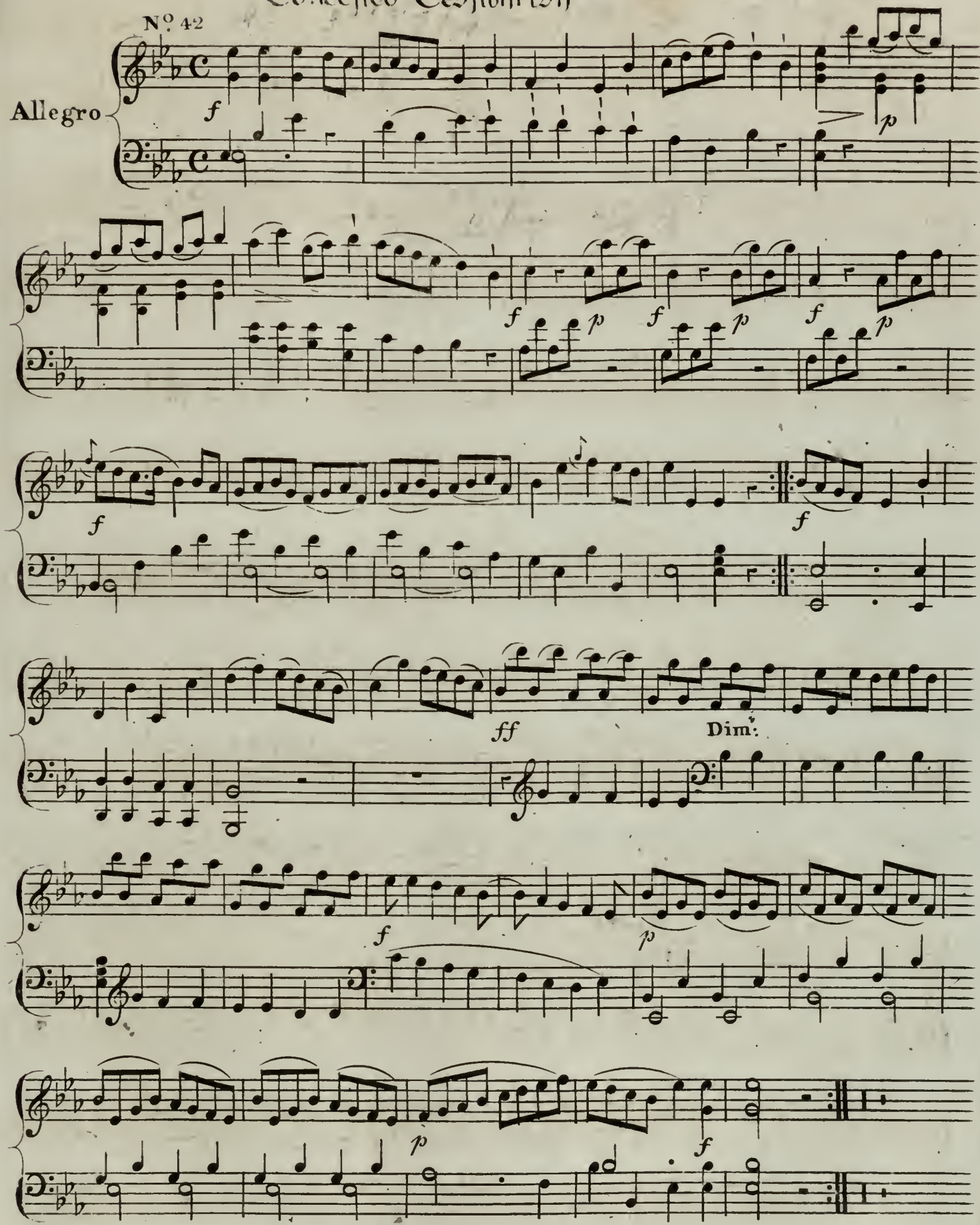
Nº 39 A pirn fan azam n. [illegible] My Dear stay with me.



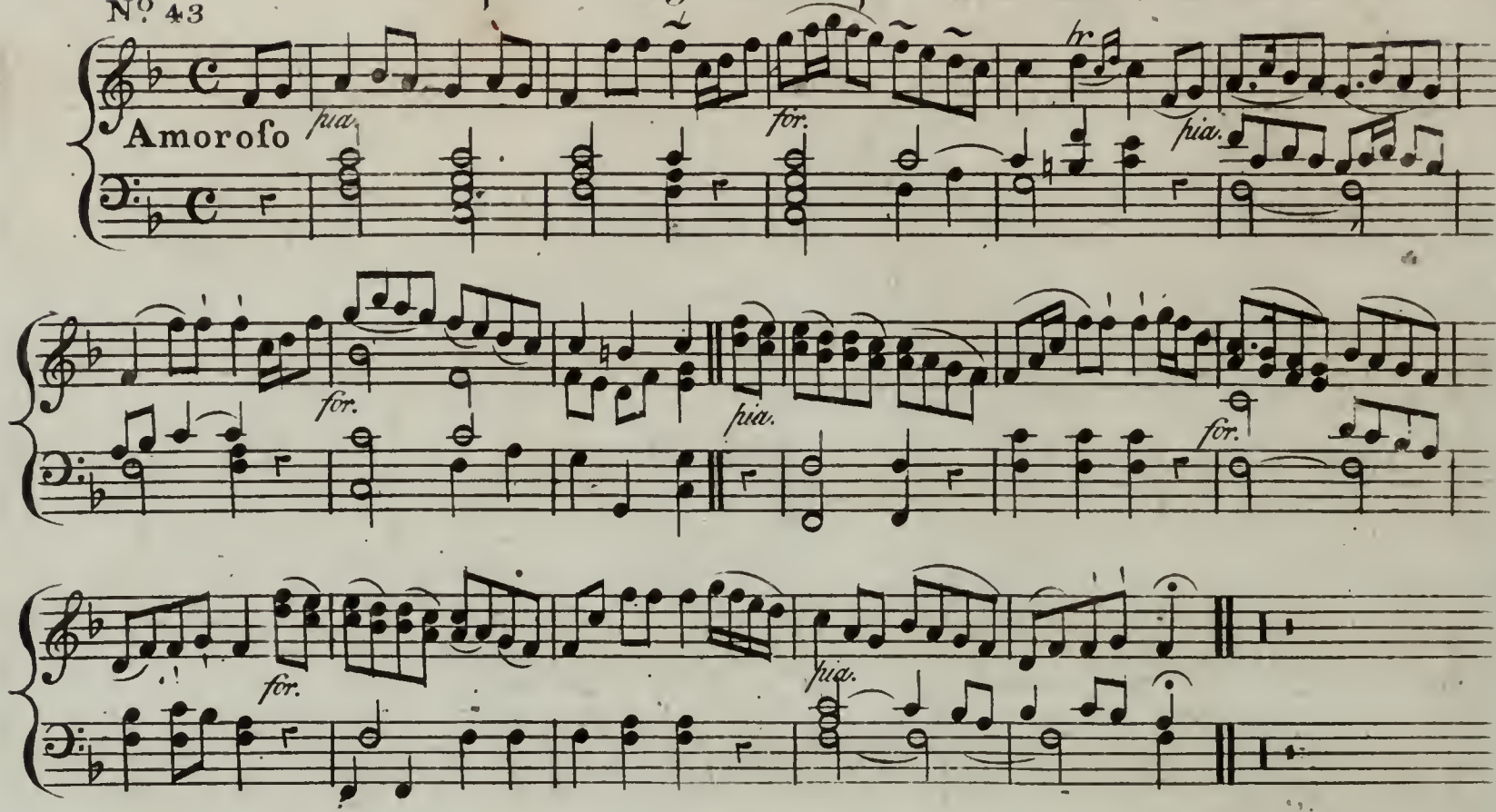

Nº 40.
The dear Black Maid.
Andante affetuoso
for.
Chorus
Nº 41.
Mary do you fancy me.
Vivace
sfor.
pia.
for.
Second Set
pia.
ff
dim:
pp

Concepto Cespbhrlsn

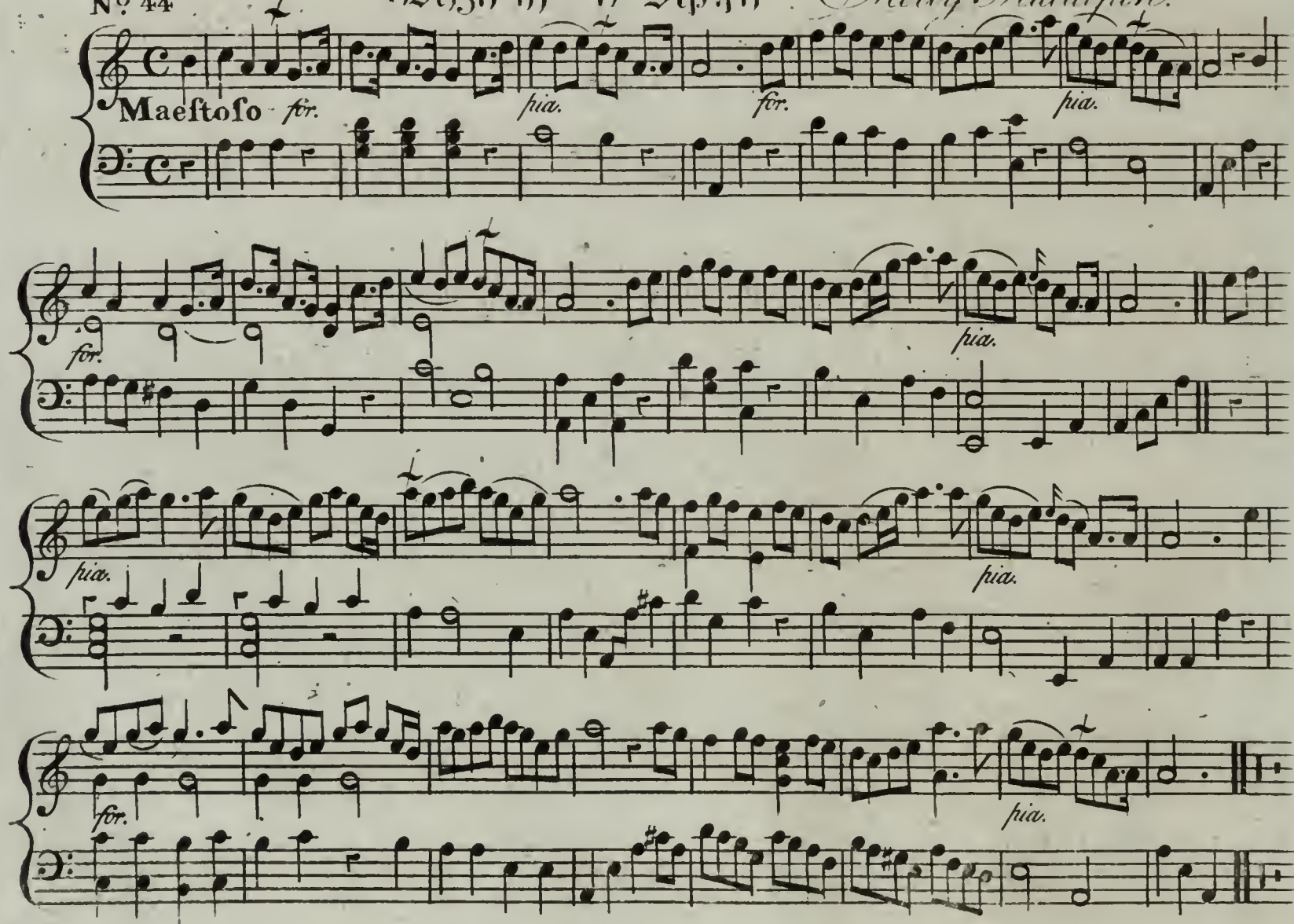
Carolan's Concerto.



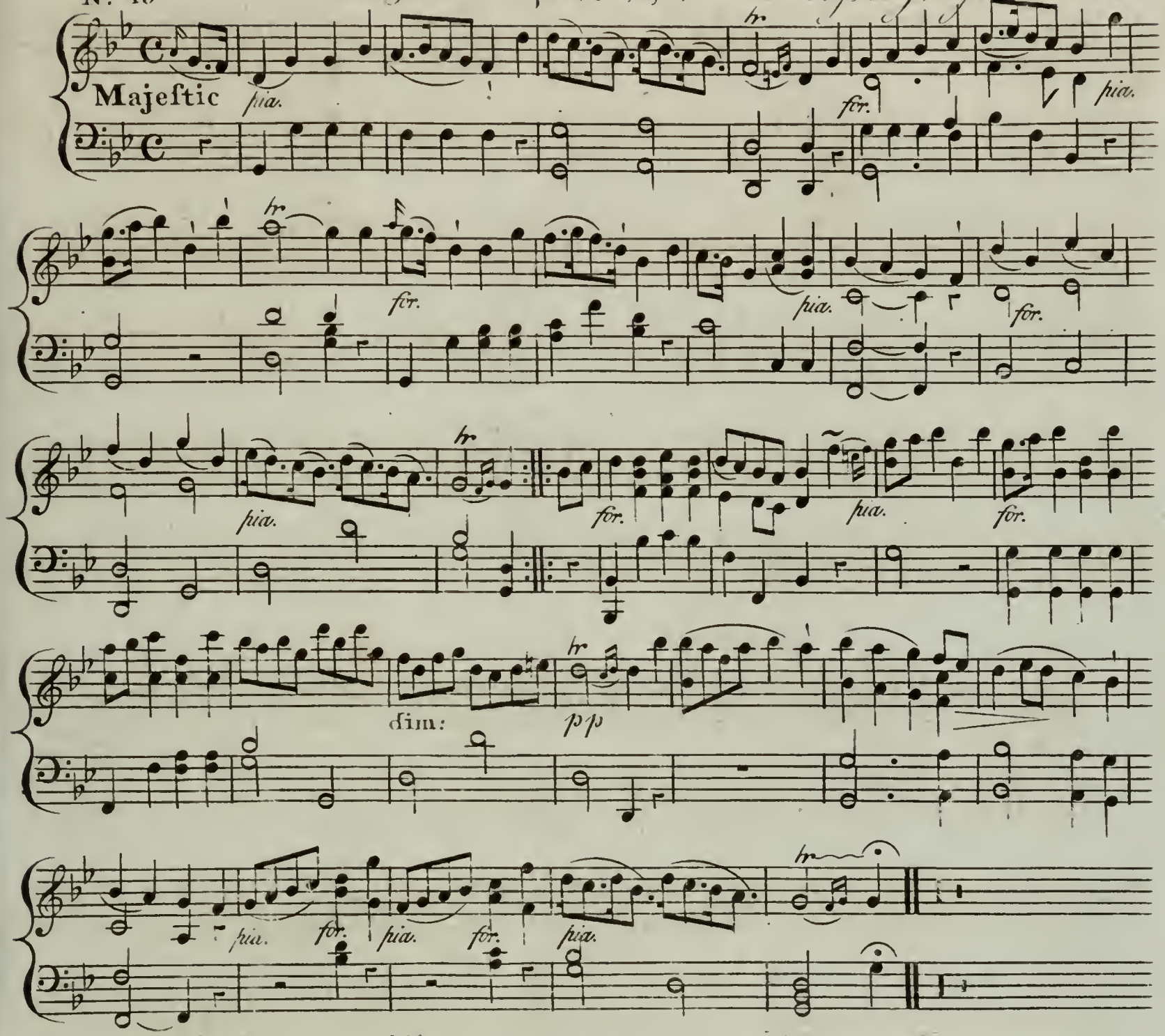
Nº 43 A pon° bhez mómhsp The Little Harvest Rose.



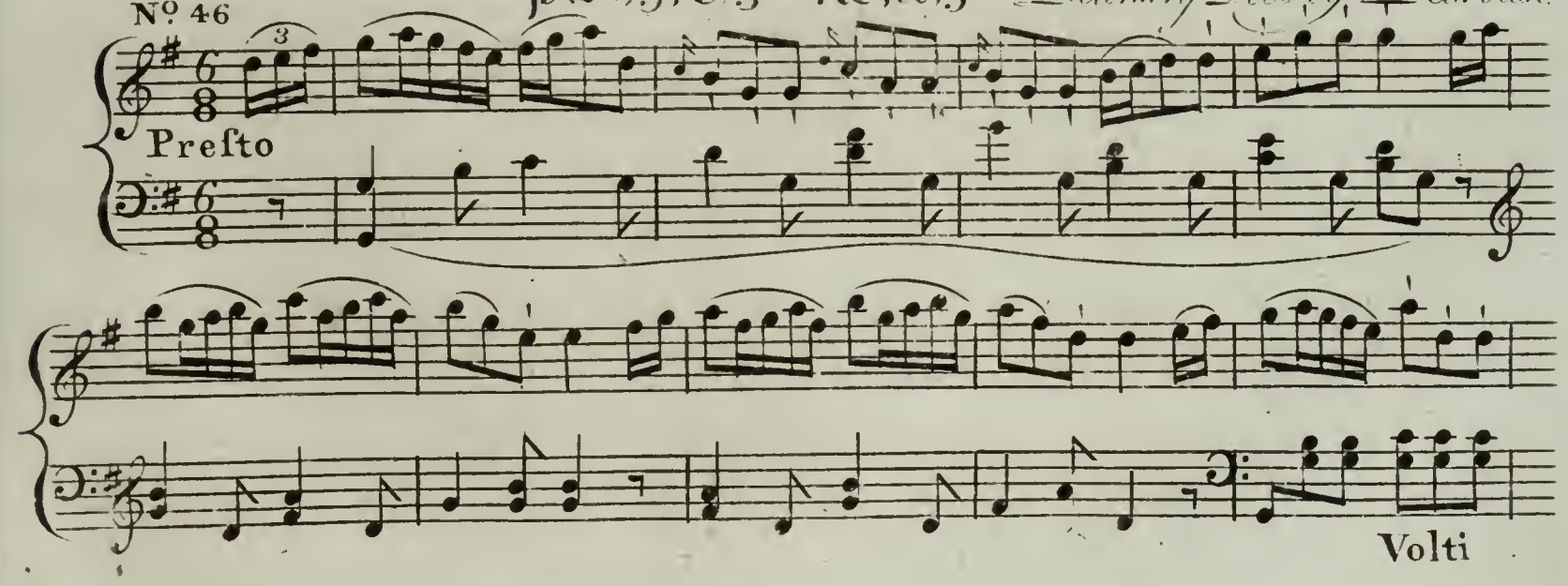
Nº 44 Nslizh m Nc slprn Molly Macalpin.



Nº 45 Abzil in bpestmkn Abigail Judge — Carolan.



Nº 46 Plonzitiz Reilliz Planxty Reilly — Carolan.



hr

for.

pia.

for.

pia.

Nº 47

Moll Srbh Ennzlsme

The Maid of the Valley.

Moderato

p

3

for.

pia.

for.

pia.

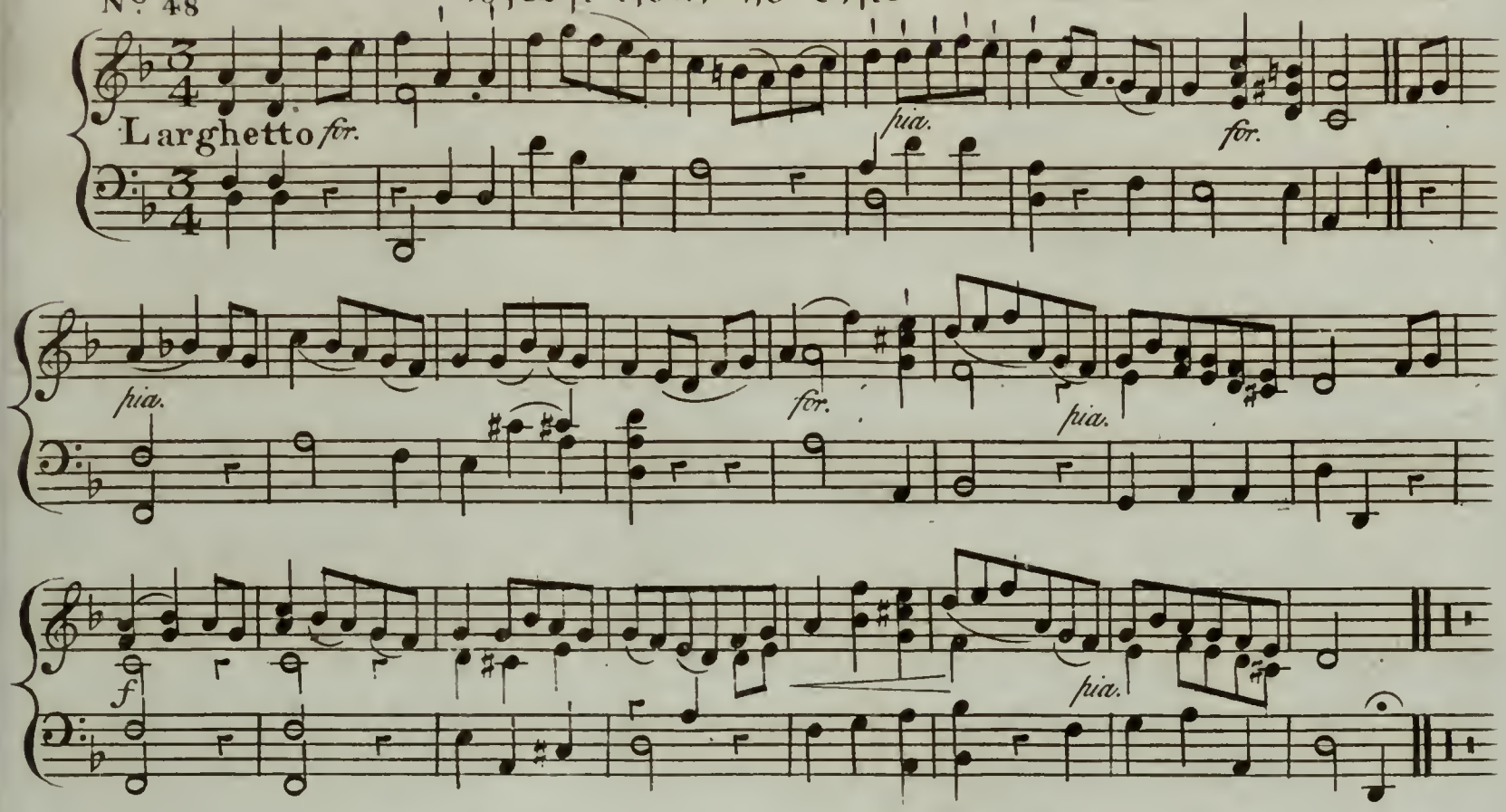
ff

p

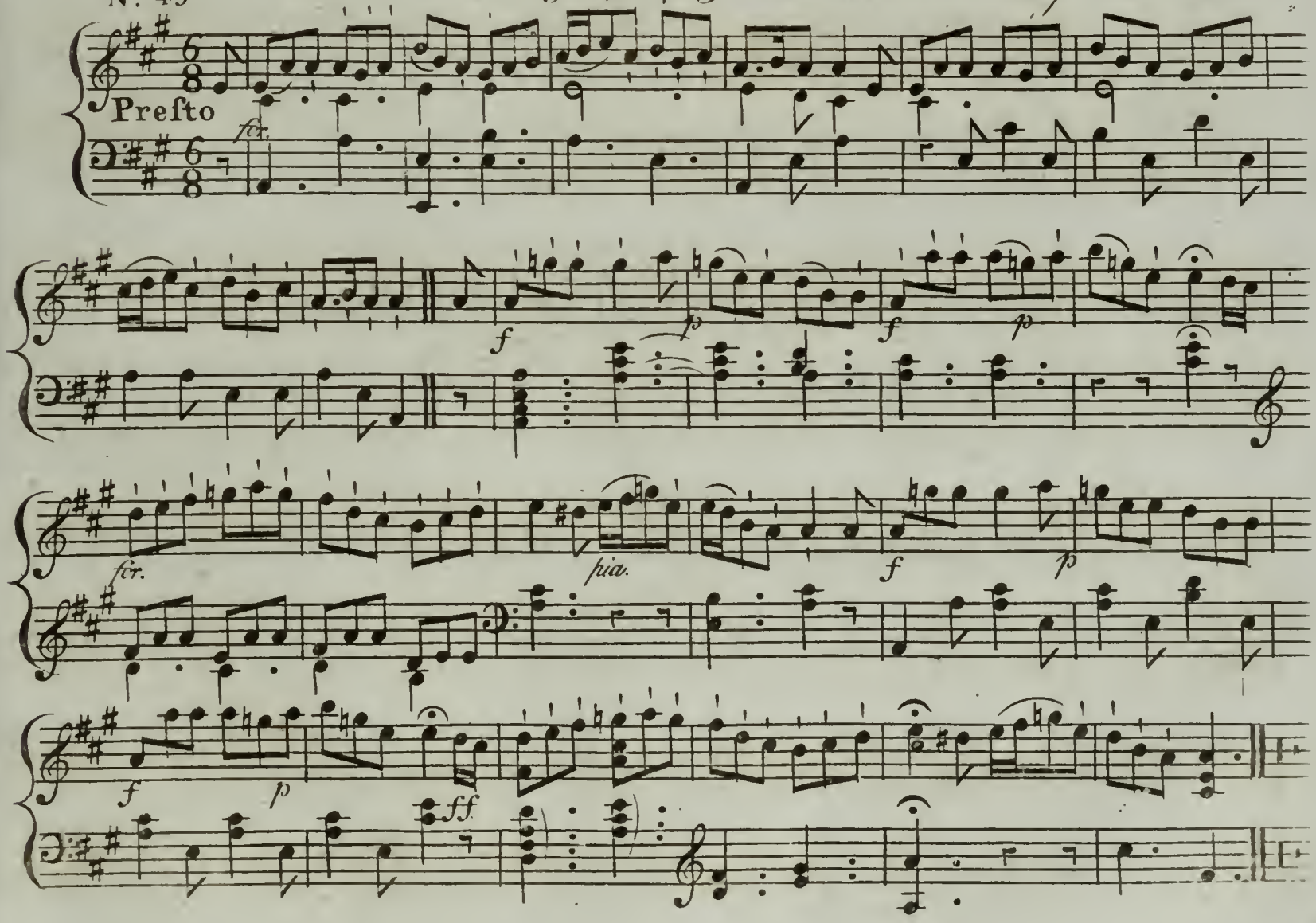
f

p

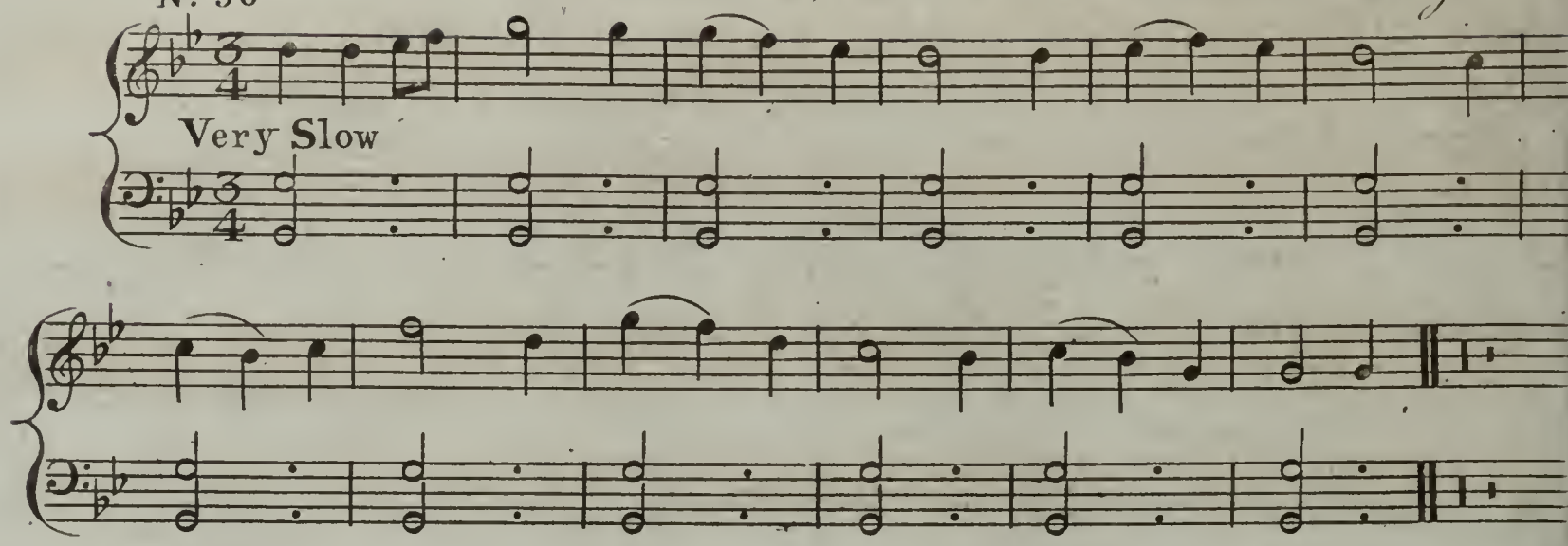
Nº 48 Bfesp hom no eipe *I would rather than Ireland.*



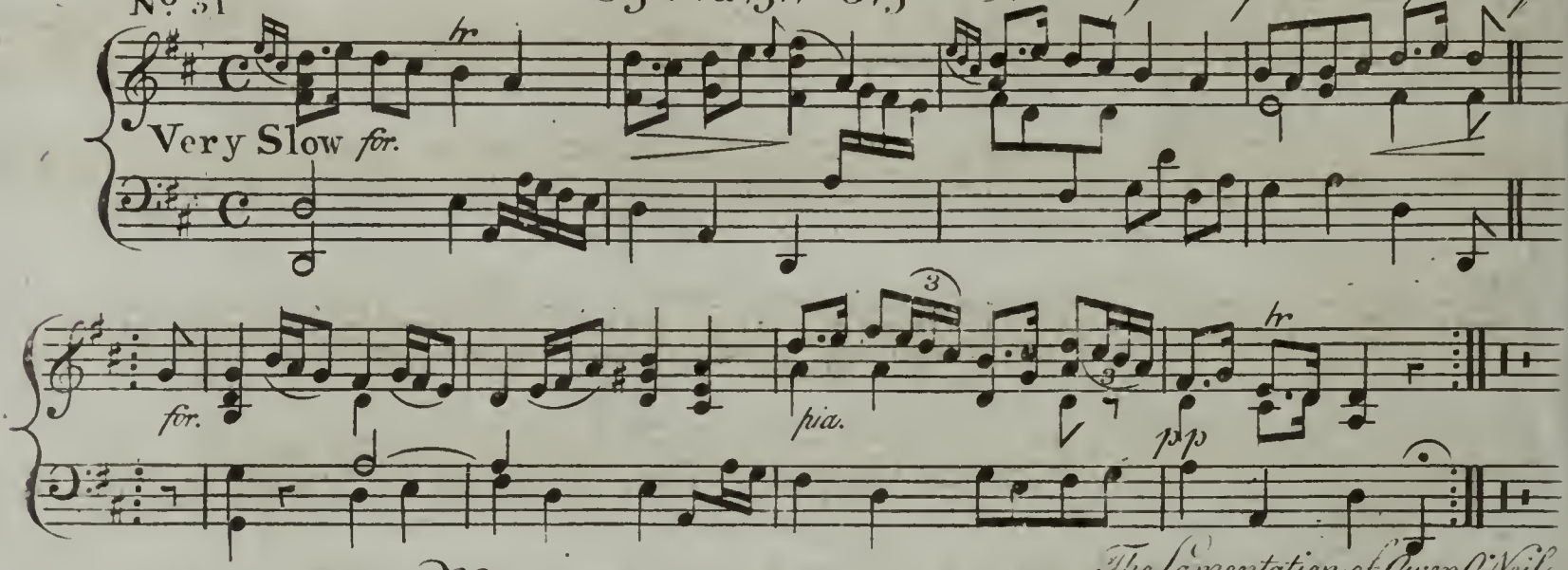
Nº 49 Ieomn o Reillizh fesp zsvbs *John O'Reilly the Active.*



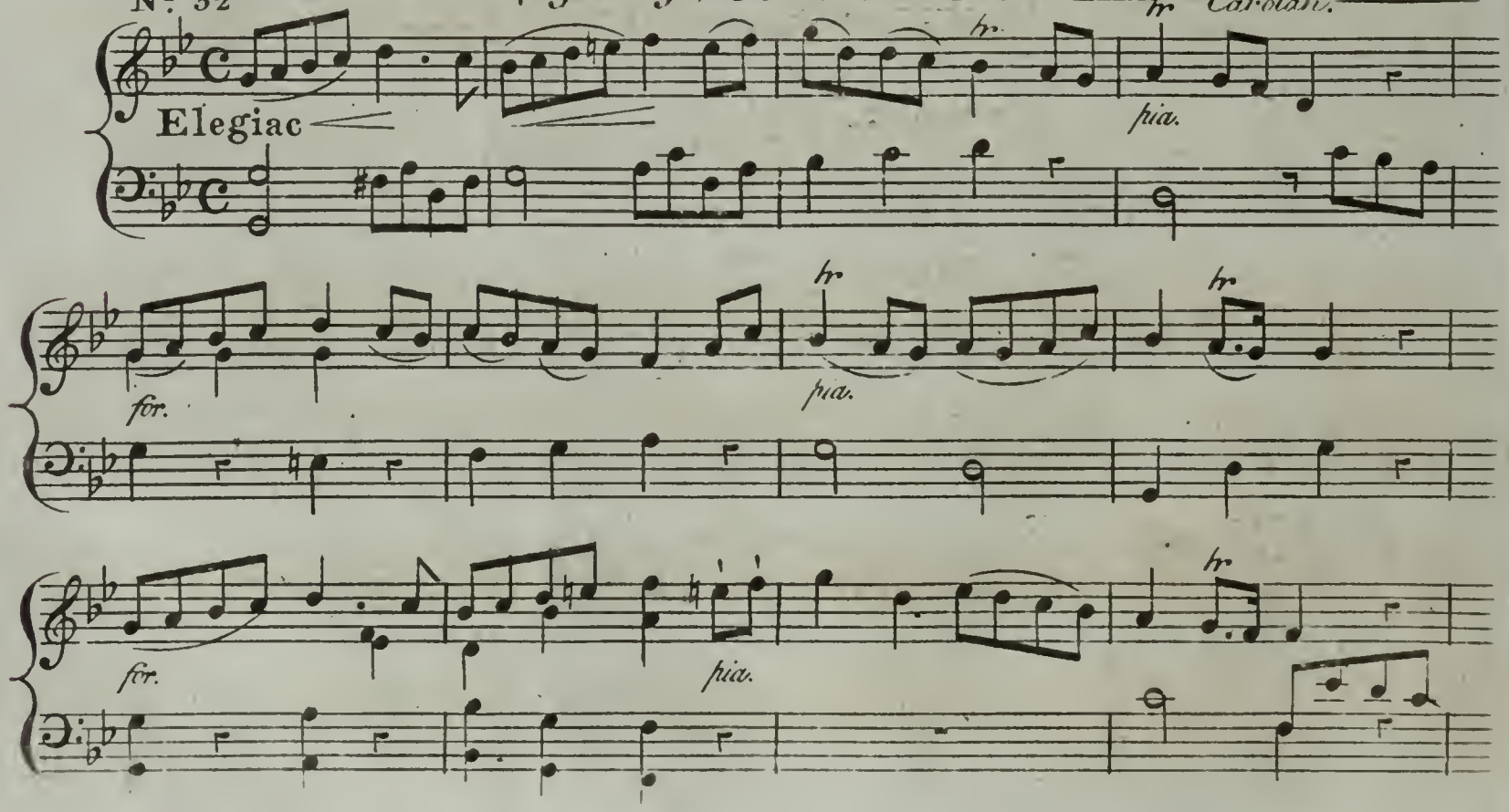
Nº 50 Jr iombo epr &cc *An Irish Lullaby.*

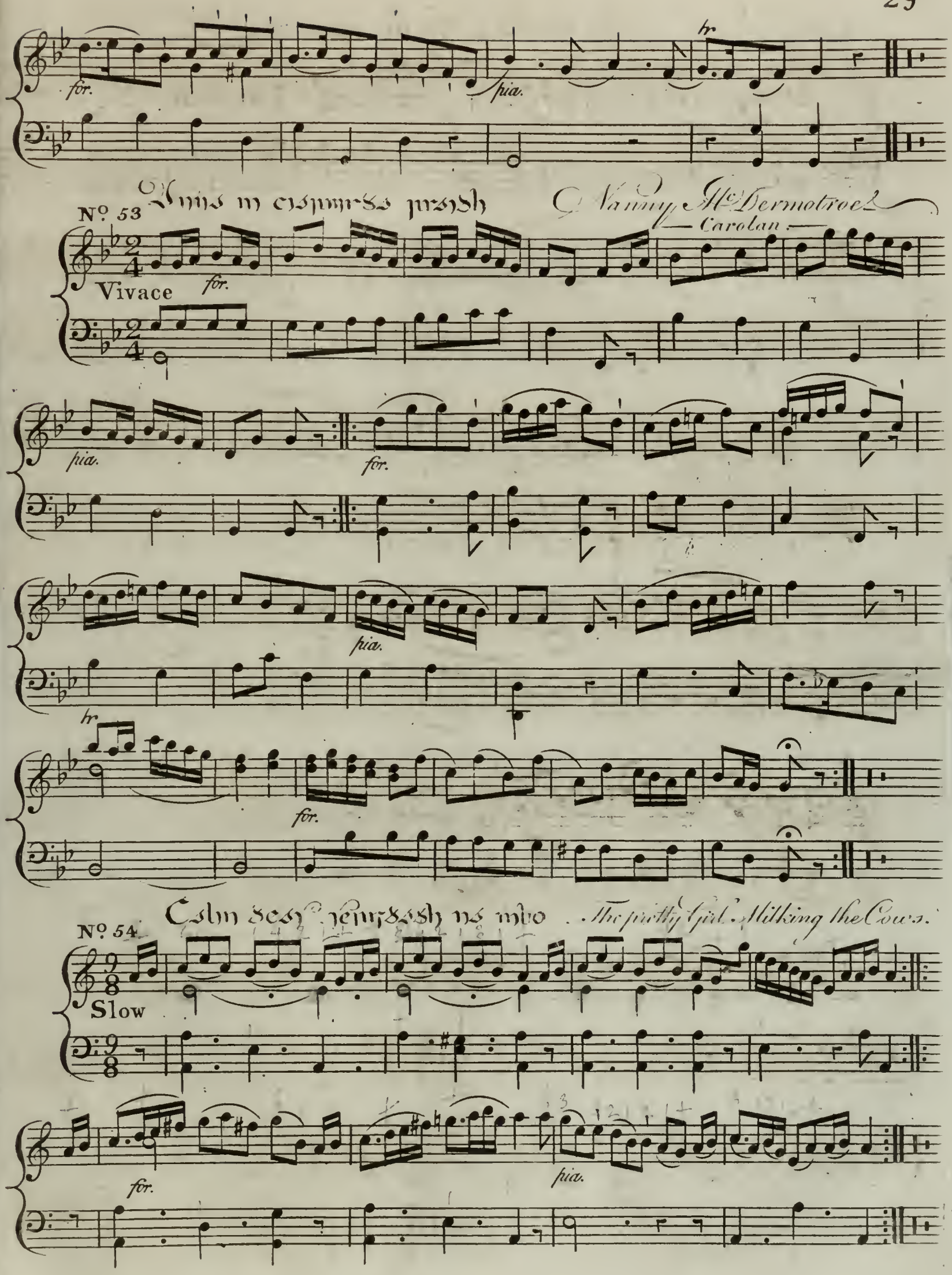


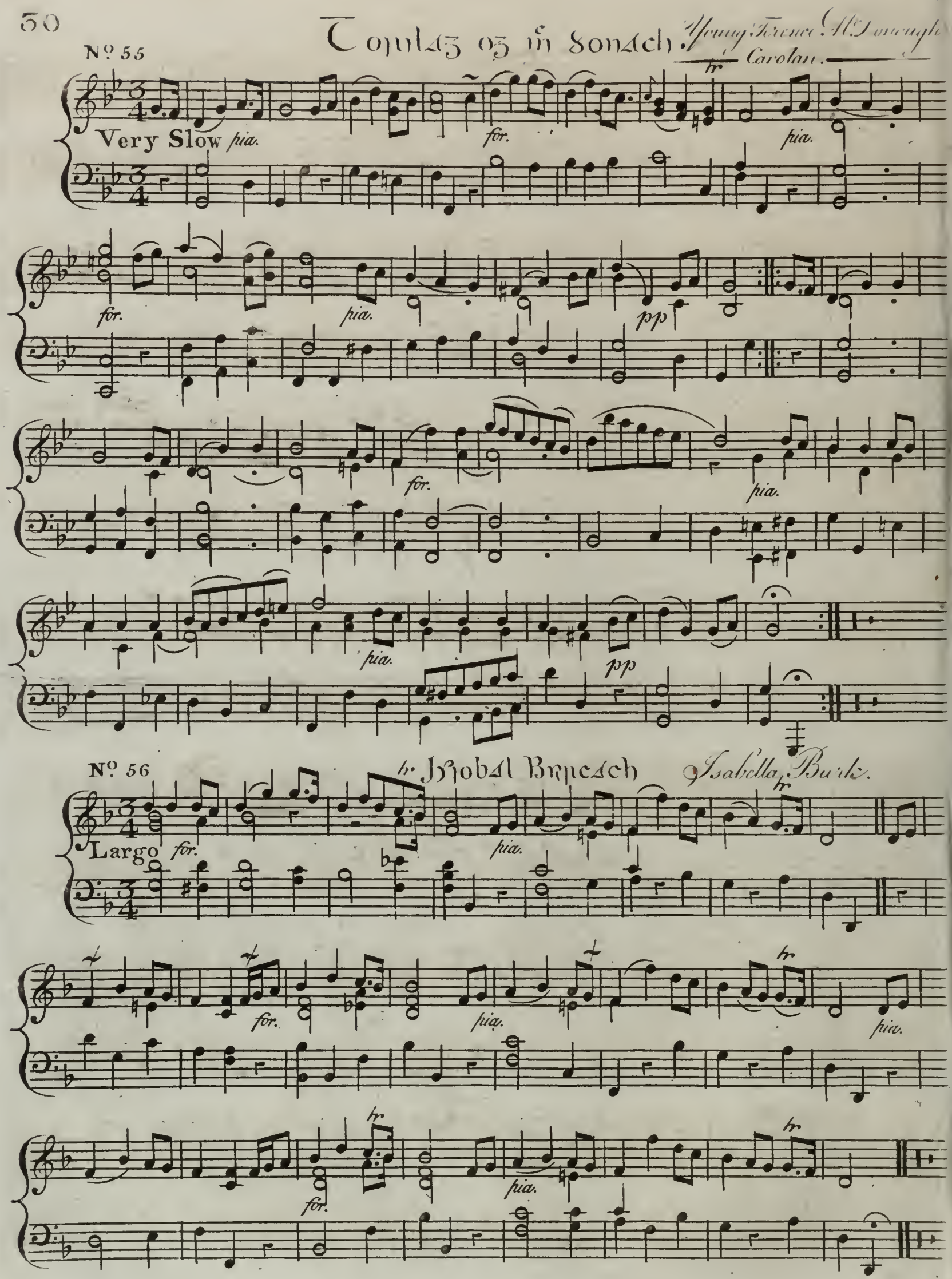
Nº 51 Ozanaizh oiz *The Blossom of the Raspberry.*

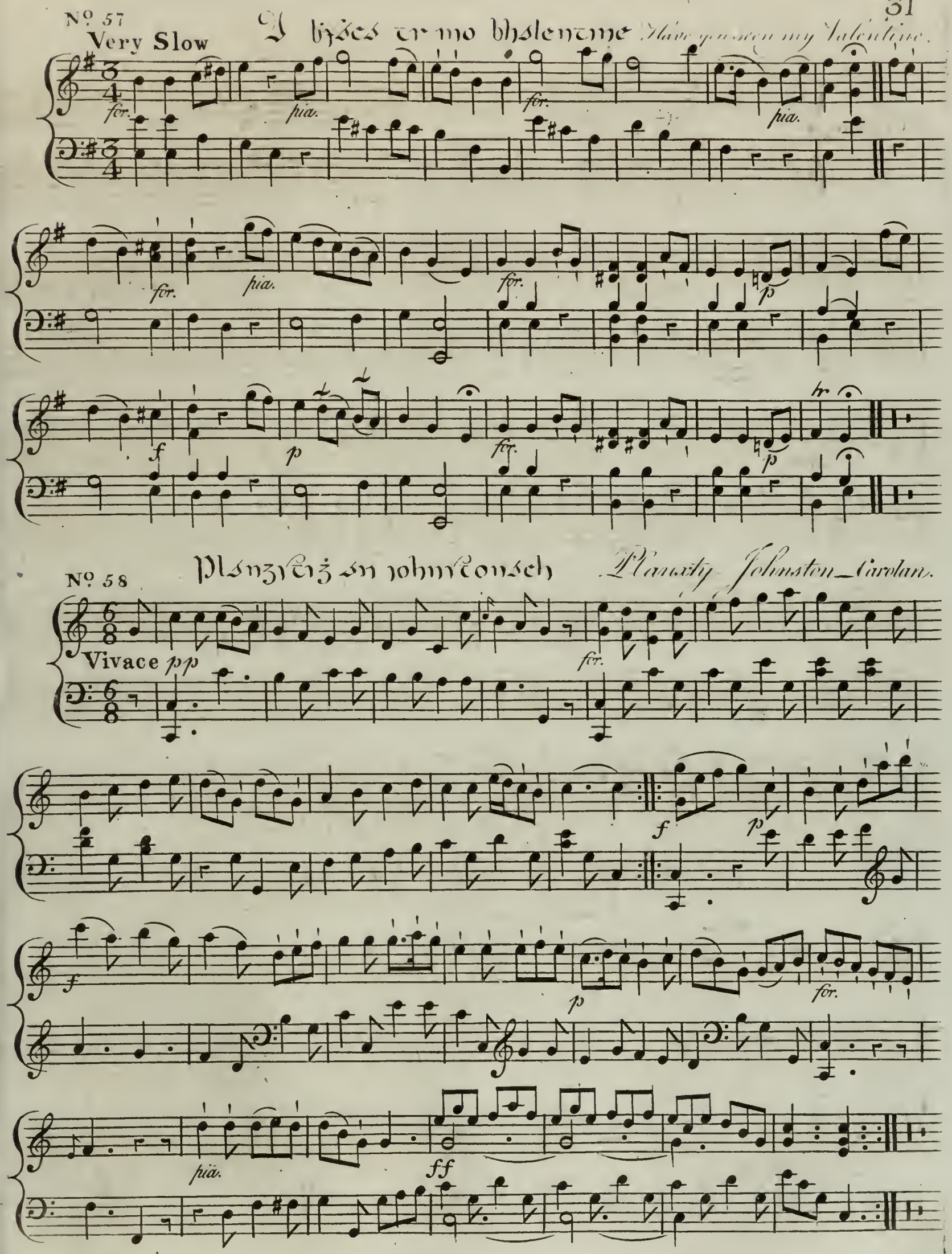


Nº 52 Manznaizh com ir neil *The Lamentation of Owen O'Neil.* Carolan.

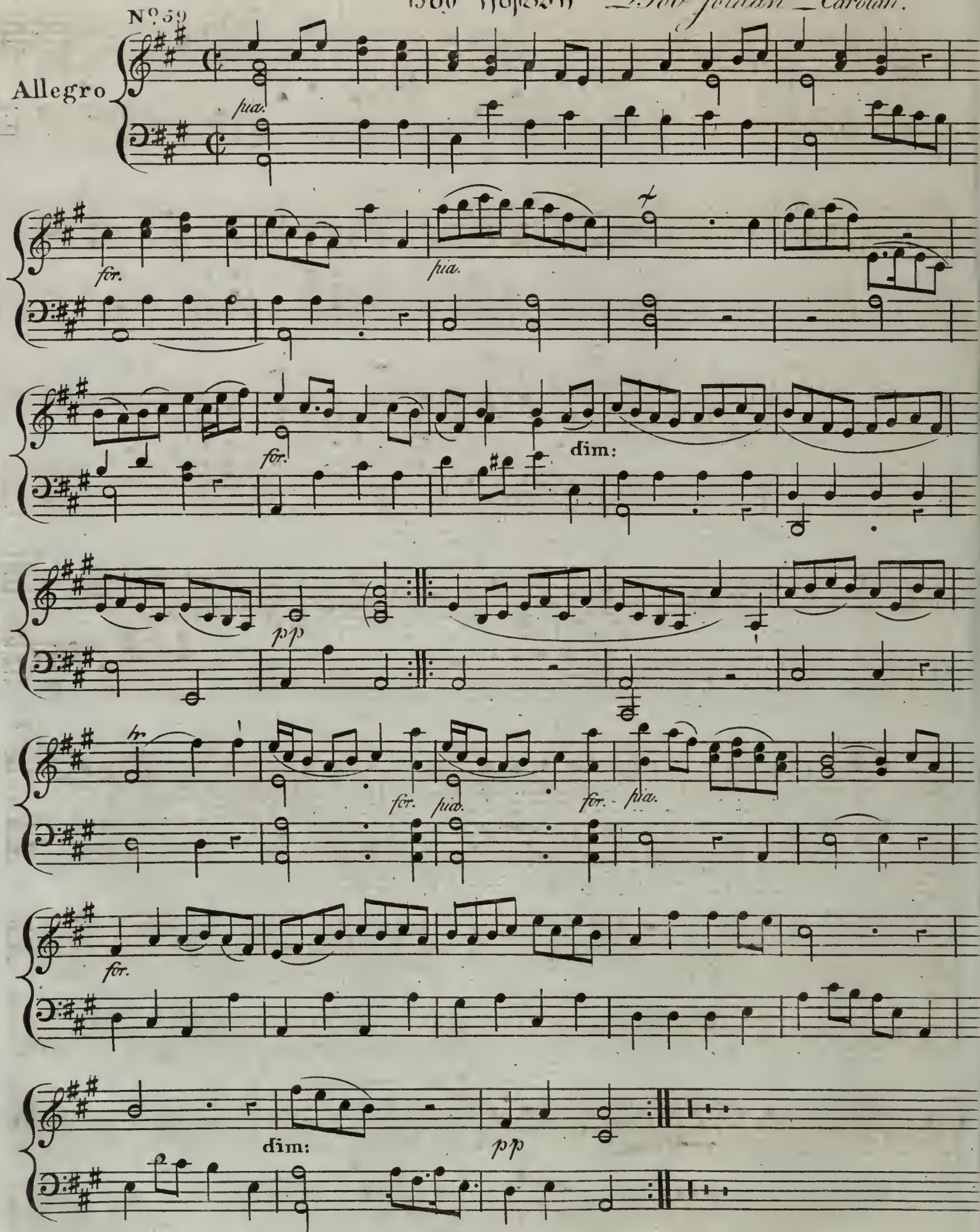



for.
pia.
tr
No. 53
Nanny McDermotroe
Carolan
Vivace
for.
pia.
for.
pia.
tr
for.
No. 54
The pretty Girl Milking the Cows.
Slow
for.
pia.


Nº 55
Very Slow
pia.
for.
pp
Nº 56
Largo
Isabella Burk.


Nº 57
Very Slow
Nº 58
Vivace pp

Bob Jordan _ Carolan.



No 60 Languid and Slow

If the Cat had Gold &c.

pia. *for.* *pia.*

No 61 Spirito

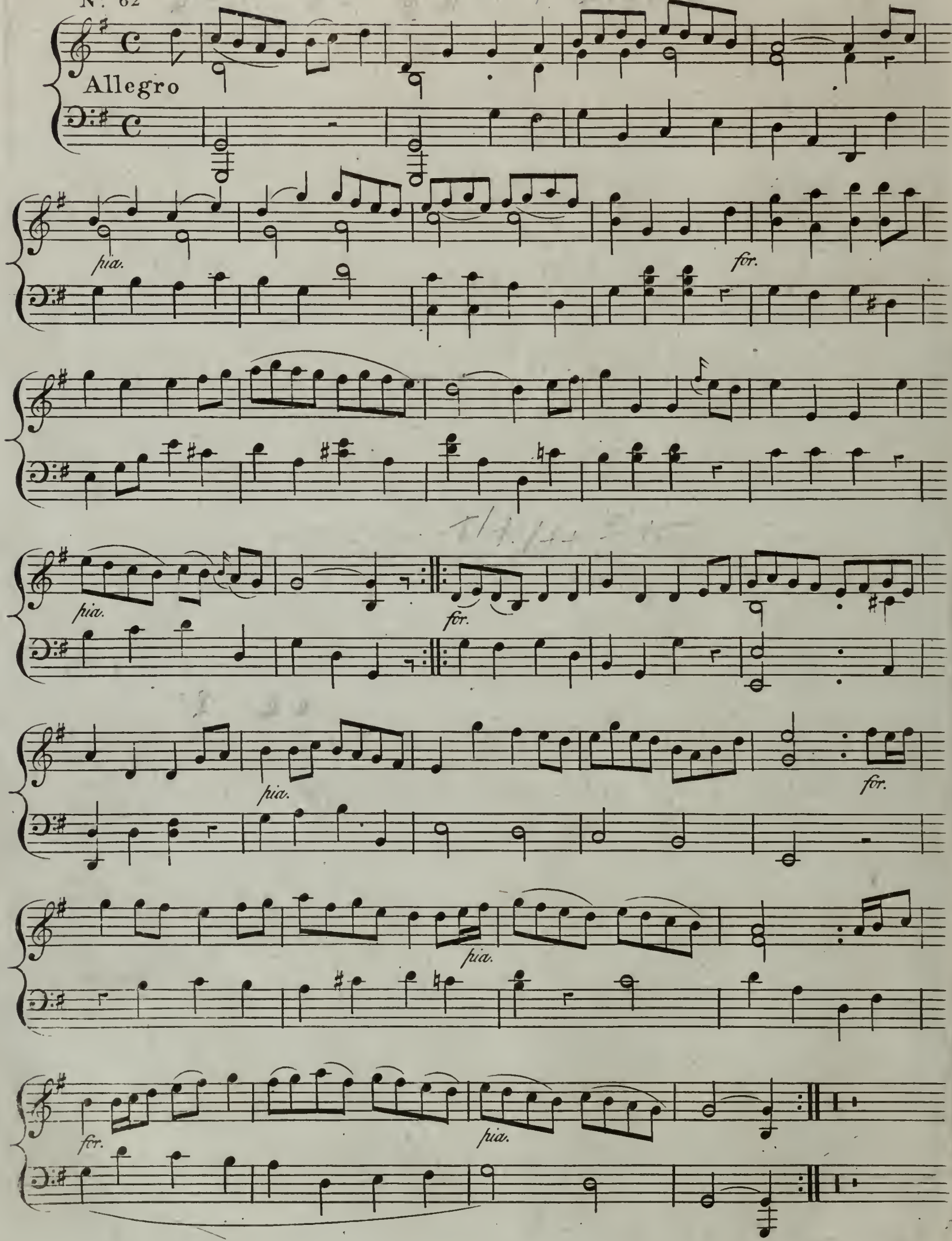
We brought the Summer with us.

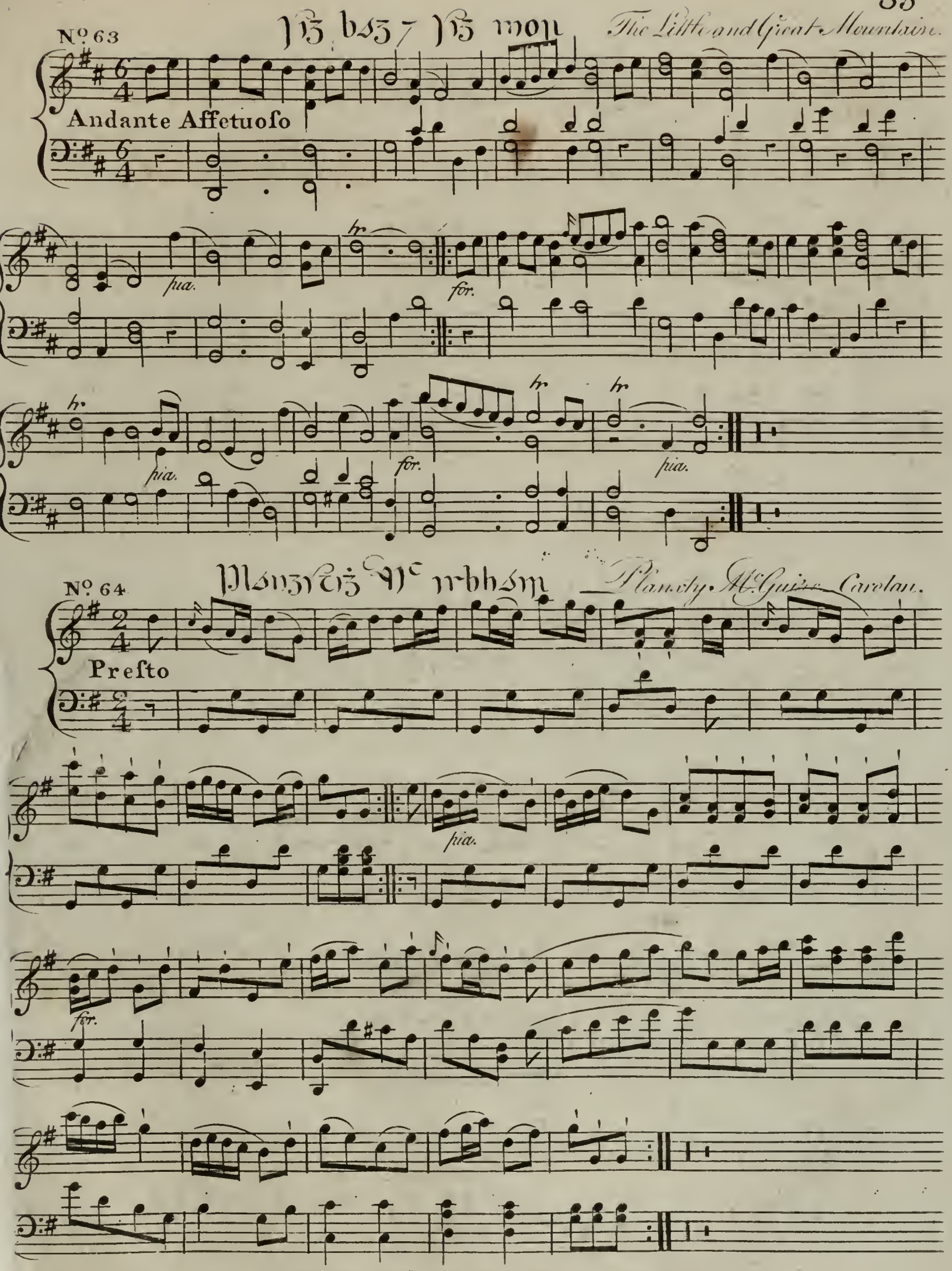
pia. *for.* *for.* *pia.* *pia.*

Tomas o bryne

Thomas O'Burk _ Carolan.

Nº 62

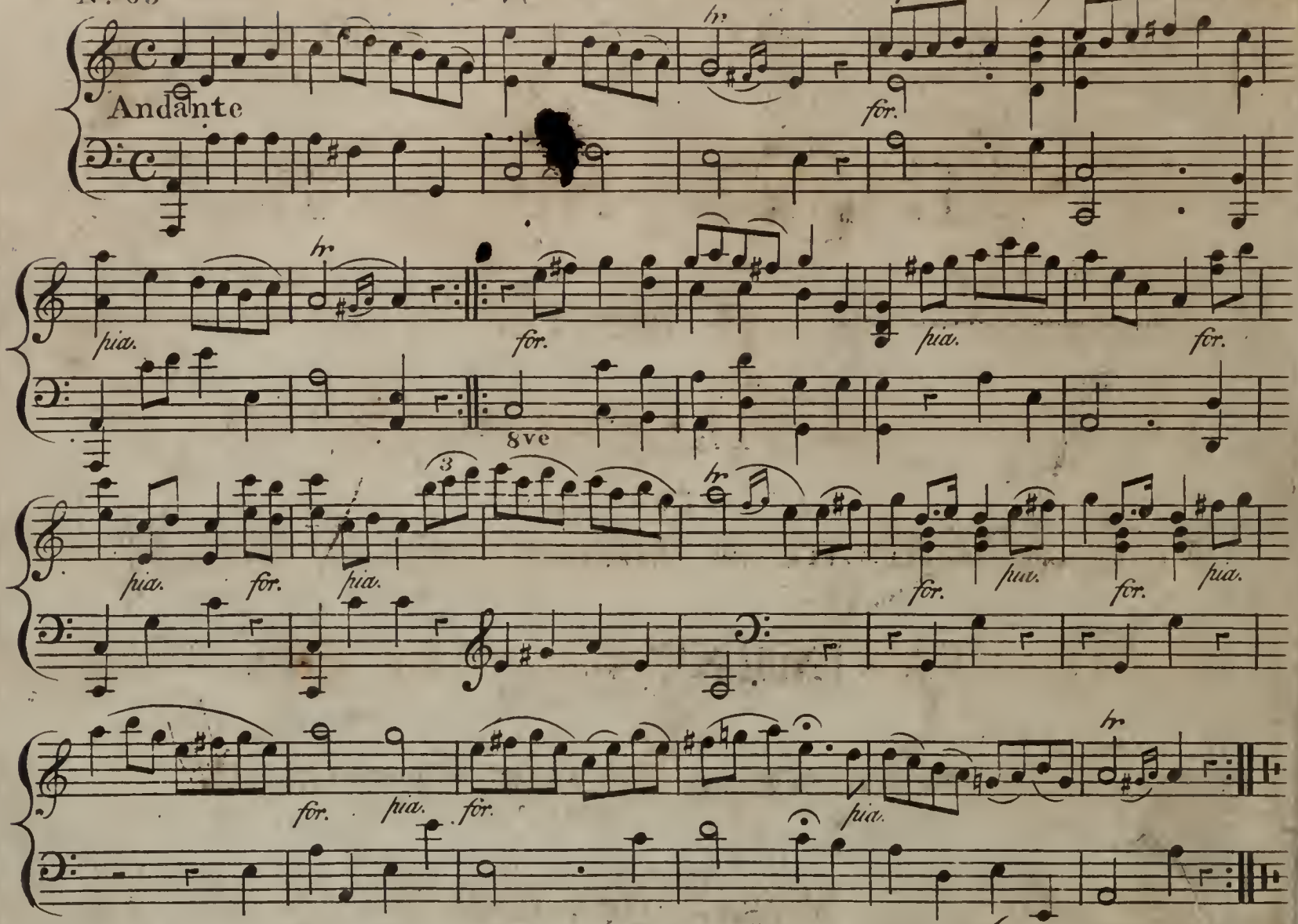




Engrav'd by Thos. Straight Nº 7 Lambeth Walk Surry.

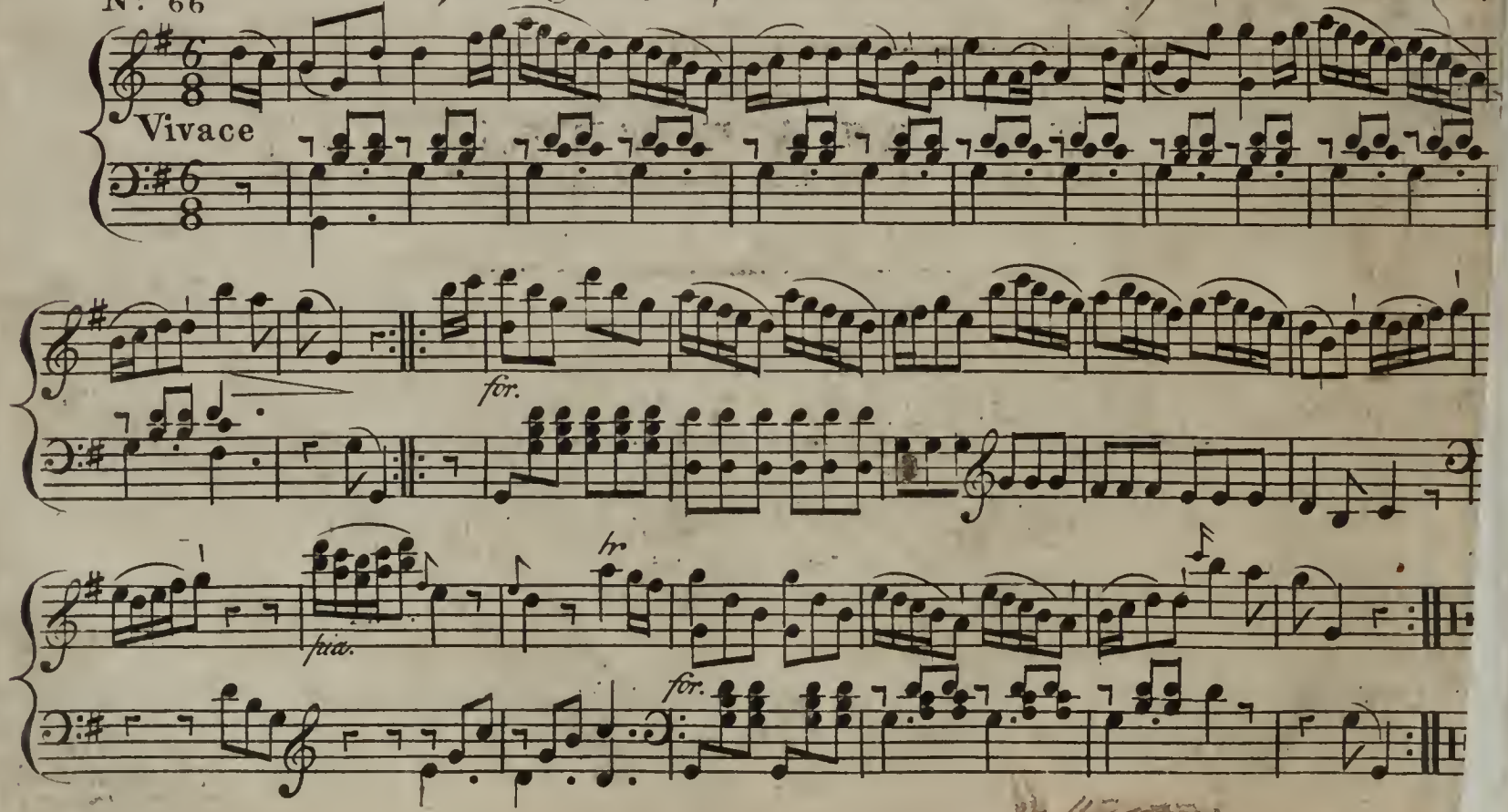
Nº 65 Zpome Nyrcon

Grace Nugent Carolan.



Nº 66 Plonzitiz op Sulonse

Plan ty Lillon Carolan.



1: 2: 9

11 4½

1: 14: 1½