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AN

ESSAY on IRISH MUSIC.

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You too, ye Bards, whom ſacred raptures fire
To chaunt your heroes to your country's lyre;
Who conſecrate in your immortal ſtrain
Brave patriot ſouls in righteous battle ſlain;
Securely now the tuneful taſk renew,
And nobler themes in deathleſs ſongs purſue.

LUCAN.

"THE early ages of every nation are enveloped in dark clouds, impervious to the rays of hiſtoric light. An attempt, therefore, (ſays an ingenious Writer) to trace the arts of Poetry and *Muſic* to their ſource in this, or in any other country, muſt be unſucceſsful: They are coeval with its original inhabitants; for man is both a Poet and *Muſician* by nature. But our buſineſs with thoſe arts does not commence till an order of men, who for ſome time united both characters, appears in the Annals of Ireland." *(a)*

Iriſh hiſtorians trace their Muſic and Bards to a very high antiquity. Whence they were derived is indeed not quite ſo certain; but it is commonly ſuppoſed that the Iriſh received them from the Mileſians, and the Mileſians from ſome parts of the Eaſt. It is certain the Druids and Bards had colleges in Ireland prior to the fifth century. The Bards originally received their education from the Druids, who were the prieſts of thoſe times; whoſe laws and ſciences were conveyed through the medium of Poetry, and recommended by the charms of Muſic. Their inſtructions, however, were always oral; neither their policy, nor the ſuperſtition of the times, ſuffering them to be committed to writing; ſo that the education of a young Bard was ſeldom compleated under a dozen years. Theſe accompliſhed, he was honoured with a kind of Doctor's degree, called *Ollamh*, ſuppoſed ſufficiently qualified for all the duties of his office, and ſometimes admitted among the Druids.

At this early period the Bards, originally a ſingle order of men, were divided into the following claſſes, all of which had ſome concern with Muſic:

The *Filea*, or Poet, whoſe office it was to turn the precepts of religion into verſe—to compoſe birth-day odes, epithalamiums, martial odes, &c.—to teach their princes—to entertain the chieftains and their gueſts at public feſtivals—to animate the army, and raiſe the cry of war.

"T' applaud the valiant, and the baſe controul;
"Diſturb, exalt, enchant the human ſoul!"

The *Brehon*, or legiſlative Bard, not only made and adminiſtered the laws, but it was his duty to chaunt them to his harp, as he was ſeated on an eminence in the open air.

The

(a) Walker's Hiſt. Mem. of Iriſh Bards, P. 1; to which elegant and learned work the Reader is indebted for moſt of the following particulars which reſpect the Bards.

The *Seanacha* was antiquarian, genealogiſt, and hiſtorian. He recorded remarkable events, and preſerved the genealogy of his patron.

Beſide the above, there was an inferior order, called *Oirfidigh*, or inſtrumental performers; who were further diſtinguiſhed by the inſtruments on which they played.

The *Caoine*, or Funeral Song, was a ſolemn ceremony which accompanied the interment of their chiefs. On this occaſion, the officiating Druid having performed the religious rites, and the pedigree of the deceaſed having been recited by his Seanacha, the proper Bard ſang the *Caoine*, which he accompanied with his harp; being aſſiſted by a chorus of inferior Bards and minſtrels, and ſometimes a company of women.

The following extract from one of theſe Elegies, compoſed on the death of *Cuchullin*, may give an idea of the natural ſublimity of theſe compoſitions, and will not, it is preſumed, be unacceptable to readers of taſte and ſenſibility.

"By the dark rolling waves of Lego, they raiſed the hero's tomb. —Luath at a diſtance lies, the companion of Cuchullin at the chace.—Bleſt be thy ſoul, ſon of Semo; thou wert mighty in battle:—Thy ſtrength was like the ſtrength of a ſtream; thy ſpeed like the eagle's wing.—Thy path in the battle was terrible: the ſteps of death were behind thy ſword.—Bleſt be thy ſoul, ſon of Semo: car-borne chief of Dunſcaiack!

"Thou haſt not fallen by the ſword of the mighty; neither was thy blood on the ſpear of the valiant.—The arrow came like the ſting of death in a blaſt: nor did the feeble hand which drew the bow perceive it.—Peace to thy ſoul in thy cave, chief of the Iſle of Miſt!" *(b)*

On the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, the Druids of courſe vaniſhed, but the Bards remained; and ſome of them, being converted, ſung hymns to the honour of God and his ſaints. One of theſe, at leaſt, *(Feach)* was made a biſhop by St. Patrick, in the fifth century, and ſeveral others of them commenced clergymen. From this time Muſic greatly flouriſhed in the Iriſh churches, inſomuch that in the tenth century, the abbey of Mungret, near Limerick, out of 1500 religious, had 500 choriſters. *(c)* About this time the clergy introduced the accentual characters of the Romiſh church, the Iriſh not appearing to have had any method of muſical notation of their own.

Formerly great part of the Iriſh muſic was *military*, and every chief had his peculiar *War Cry* *. It has been alſo ſuppoſed that the various invaſions to which theſe people were ſubject, firſt gave a melancholic tincture to their Muſic, and introduced among them the *minor* mode. This ariſes, however, from an idea that the Muſic of all countries was originally *major*; an hypotheſis that will admit of debate; and it is to be added, that ſolitude, and various other circumſtances, might produce the ſame effects.

The ancient *Muſical Inſtruments* of the Iriſh have furniſhed matter of curious enquiry. *(d)* The principal were the *Harp* and *Bagpipe*. Of the former they had four varieties, differing in ſize, form, and number of ſtrings. Indeed, this ſeems to have been the favourite inſtrument of many northern nations, and has been ſuppoſed to have originated among them. The Iriſh probably had it from the Mileſians, and conveyed it to the Highlanders and Welſh. But it was alſo well known in the Eaſt. Mr. Bruce deſcribes the painting of ſeveral he met with in the ruins of ancient Thebes: But we know, from better authority, that it was at a very early period the favourite of the Hebrews. The *Bagpipe*, indeed, was probably a northern inſtrument, yet not excluſively ſo; ſince we find an inſtrument of this kind among the Greeks, Chineſe, and ſeveral other nations. Of this inſtrument there are alſo varieties; the large War Bagpipe is peculiar to the Highlanders, and well calculated to animate their warlike and ferocious temper: but the Iriſh Bagpipe is ſmaller, blown by the mouth, and capable of great ſweetneſs and expreſſion.

Among the vocal Muſic of the Iriſh a ſtranger would not expect much excellency, on account of the apparent harſhneſs of the language: There are not wanting, however, advocates for this; who aſſert, (ſtrange as it may ſeem) that the Iriſh is more muſical than even the Italian, or any other European language. *(e)*

The ſtile of the ancient Iriſh Muſic is ſaid by their early writers to have

(b) *Macpherſon*'s Death of Cuchullin.
(c) *Ledwich*'s Monast. Hib.
(d) *Walker*'s Iriſh Bards, P. 69, and ſeq. Alſo, Appendix, No. I, and VIII.
(e) Ibid. P. 65.
* See No. CIV. in the following Collection.

have been enharmonic. If ſo, it muſt be in the ſame ſenſe that Dr. *Burney* explains the term in relation to the Old Enharmonic of the Greeks; *i. e.* without Semitones. *(f)*

" The Iriſh Muſic is in ſome degree, (ſays a native) diſtinguiſhed from the Muſic of every other nation by an inſinuating ſweetneſs, which forces its way irreſiſtably to the heart." *(g)* Abating ſomething for national partiality, a great degree of excellence muſt be allowed to the plaintive airs, and a wonderful glee and vivacity to the jigs.

We have hinted, on a former occaſion, that the Scots probably derived a great part of their Muſic from the Iriſh; *(h)* and there is reaſon to think the Welſh were indebted to the ſame maſters.

But to return to our Narrative.—At the revival of literature, the Bards were reduced to two claſſes; *viz.* Hiſtorians and Rhapſodiſts; from which laſt the modern Bards were derived. One of theſe, *O'Carrol*, flouriſhed with a ſchool of pupils, in the year 1340.

Our Henry VIII. in compliment to the muſical fame of Ireland, gave them a harp for their arms, and James I. quartered it with thoſe of France and England.

Several famous Bards flouriſhed in the reign of Elizabeth: But as we know not that any of their Muſic is preſerved, it would afford little entertainment to recite their names.

The preſent century has produced ſome eminent Bards.—*Cormac Common, (i)* (or Cormac Dall; *i. e.* Blind Cormac) was born May 1703, in the county of Mayo, of poor parents, and within the firſt year had the misfortune to loſe his ſight by the ſmall-pox. He is celebrated for being the laſt of the *Tale-Tellers*; and recited his melancholy narrative much in the manner of cathedral chaunting. He was a poet, a harper, and, when young, a fine ſinger; and was lately, at the age of more than four-ſcore, living near Dunmore, in the county of Galway.

But the moſt eminent of all the modern Bards was the famous *Carolan*, author of a great part of the tunes in the following collection; who therefore claims our particular attention.

(f) Hiſtory of Muſic, Vol. I. P. 497.
(g) *Walker*'s Iriſh Bards, P. 65.
(h) Eſſay on the Scots Muſic, prefixed to the Caledonian Muſe, P. 2.

Turlough O'Carolan *(k)* was born at Nobber, in the county of Weſtmeath, A. D. 1670, on a ſpot denominated from his anceſtors, though it has been ſeveral ages in other hands. The ſmall-pox, at a very early period, deprived him of his eye-ſight, and

" Knowledge at one entrance quite ſhut out."

But Providence, as in many ſimilar inſtances, in ſome degree compenſated for this loſs, by beſtowing on him a fine ear and taſte for Muſic. So that, as himſelf uſed quaintly to expreſs it, his eyes were tranſplanted into his ears.

Our Bard diſcovered early marks of a muſical genius, and at twelve years old he had an inſtructor for the harp; but, (as often happens) his diligence not keeping pace with his genius, he never excelled as an inſtrumental performer, and ſeldom uſed his inſtrument but in extempore effuſions, or as an accompanyment to his voice; and even this office was frequently ſupplied by a domeſtic.

Blindneſs is no certain defence againſt love. Carolan found this; for pretty early in life he became enamoured with a Miſs Bridget Cruiſe, which is ſaid to have firſt tuned his harp to love, though, in this inſtance, his love was unſucceſsful. An incident with reference to this Lady is related, which ſhews that the loſs of one ſenſe may be the perfection of ſeveral others. Our Bard's blindneſs was not only compenſated by an ear nicely tuned to harmony, but by an exquiſite ſenſibility in *feeling*. In a ſubſequent part of life, being induced by the ſuperſtition of that religion in which he had been educated, and to which he always tenaciouſly adhered, he made a pilgrimage to a celebrated cave, called *St. Patrick's Purgatory*, ſituated on an iſland in the county of Donegal.—Handing ſome other pilgrims into the boat, he chanced to take the hand of the above Lady, and inſtantly exclaimed, " This is the hand of Bridget Cruiſe;" a circumſtance that awakened in full vigour the recollection of his early attachment.

Carolan's want of ſucceſs with the firſt object of his attachment, did not

(i) Walker's Iriſh Bards, Appendix, No. V.
(k) Ibid, No. VI.

not cool his paſſion for the fair ſex, and the loſs of Miſs Cruiſe was ſupplied in the embraces of a Miſs Mary Macguire; a young Lady of good family, though not remarkable for meekneſs or œconomy. At this time, it is ſuppoſed, he took a ſmall farm near Moſhill, in the county of Leitrim, and erected a little houſe, where himſelf and lady enjoyed themſelves, and entertained their friends; till, in the ſequel, they diſcovered that neither his genius nor her beauty were ſufficient to keep open doors, or ſupply their table even with the neceſſaries, and much leſs the luxuries of life.

This was probably one circumſtance that induced Carolan to commence itinerant Bard, and exhibit a genuine repreſentation of Homer's *Demodocus*. He traverſed the country on his own horſe, attended by a domeſtic Harper. The doors of the Nobility and Gentry were every where thrown open for his entertainment. He ſcorned to compoſe for hire; but his conſtant cuſtom was to reward his benefactor with a ſong, made on himſelf, or a principal branch of the family: Some of the moſt celebrated of theſe (and diſtinguiſhed by the name of the ſubject) were compoſed on —— Jones, Eſq. of Money Glaſs, in the county of Leitrim—J. Nugent, Eſq. of Caſtle Nugent, Culambre, and his fair ſiſter, Miſs Grace Nugent—all which will be found in the following collection. *(l)*

The occaſion of ſeveral other of his compoſitions is remarkable.—Tradition ſays, that O'Rourke, a powerful and turbulent Iriſh chieftain, was invited by the politic Elizabeth, queen of England, on a viſit to her court. Before he left his native country, he aſſembled all his vaſſals and neighbours, and gave them a ſumptuous treat at his caſtle. This event Mr. Mac Gauran, a gentleman of Leitrim, who poſſeſſed a happy talent at ludicrous poetry, made the ſubject of a ſong, *(m)* which Carolan, his contemporary and friend, ſet to Muſic; and *Plaracana Ruarcach*, or O'Rourke's Feaſt, is left a monument to their joint memory. *(n)*

A Miſs *Fetherſton*, a Proteſtant lady of the county of Longford, going to church one Sunday, met with Carolan going to maſs. She gave him an invitation to her houſe; but the Bard, with his uſual gallantry, excuſed himſelf from a pretended terror of her wit. At parting, ſhe requeſted his prayers, but he proteſted ſhe was the object of his devotion; and accordingly, inſtead of praying, compoſed the ſong which he called *Carolan's Devotion. (o)*

Carolan, unhappily for his health and character, was immoderately given to whiſkey, and always treated his Muſe with a glaſs when he invoked her. Once, at the earneſt remonſtrance of his medical friends, he refrained ſix weeks from his favourite liquor, during which his uſual gaiety and genius forſook him. At length, unable to contain any longer, he procured a glaſs of it to ſmell to. Immediately as the fumes reached his head, his countenance brightened—his vivacity rekindled—and he could no longer reſiſt the bewitching draught. Before morning he compoſed the charming ſong of *Carolan's Receipt. (p)*

As to treat the Bard was a certain method of inſpiring his Muſe; ſo to deny the exhilarating draught was equally ſure to attract his ſatire. One O'Flynn, the careful butler of a certain parſimonious lady, whom he then viſited, once refuſing him admittance to his cellar, procured himſelf a ſevere epigram, of which the following is a tranſlation:

"What pity Hell's gates are not kept by O'Flynn!
"So ſurly a dog would let nobody in."

The ancient Bards, we have obſerved, often pretended to prophecy; and that our Bard might not be thought inferior to any of them, the following ſtory is related of him:—Having often tried to compoſe a *plangſty* for a Miſs Brett, of the county of Slingo, but never to his ſatisfaction, he one day threw away his harp, with this declaration to her mother;—"Some evil Genius (ſaid he) hovers over me; there is not a ſtring in my harp that does not vibrate a melancholy ſound—I fear ſhe is not doomed to remain long amongſt us: Nay, (ſaid he, emphatically) ſhe *will not* ſurvive twelve months."—The event is ſaid

(l) See in the following Collection, Numbers I. XI. L.
(m) A tranſlation of this ſong was made by Dean Swift, and is to be found in his Works.
(n) No. VII.
(o) No. CVII.
(p) No. III. in the following Collection.

ſaid to have verified the prediction; but what inferences are to be drawn from this and ſimilar narrations, muſt be left to the cool inveſtigation of philoſophy.

It is reported, that when Geminiani was at Dublin, he had the curioſity to try the genius of Carolan, by procuring a piece of Italian Muſic to be played to him, excellent in itſelf, but purpoſely vitiated in certain places. Carolan was delighted with the Muſic; but much to the ſurpriſe of the hearers, diſcovered, and even rectified its defects.

At another time, it is ſaid, meeting with a muſician of ſome eminence at the houſe of an Iriſh nobleman, he challenged him to a trial of ſkill. The muſician played Vivaldi's fifth concerto on his violin. This finiſhed, Carolan, with wonderful exactneſs, repeated it on his harp, though he had never before heard it; and, to increaſe the ſurpriſe of his auditory, added another concerto of his own, extemporary, in which he copied the taſte of the Italian compoſer, in a manner quite aſtoniſhing.

It has been obſerved above, that Carolan was a Roman Catholic, and it ſhould be added, that he compoſed ſeveral pieces of Sacred Muſic, which, with great devotion, he performed in the public ſervice, to the aſtoniſhment of the congregation.

In the year 1733, Carolan loſt his beloved Mary Macguire, who had lived faithfully in obſcure retirement with her children, while our Iriſh *Orpheus* traverſed the country. This event threw a gloom upon his mind, and is thought to have haſtened his death, which happened in March 1738, at the houſe of Mrs. Mac Dermot, of Alderford. Dr. *Goldſmith* relates, (upon what authority is uncertain) that even in the article of death he called for a draught of his beloved liquor, which being brought at his earneſt importunity, he was not able to ſwallow; but returned it with this unſeaſonable jeſt, that it would be hard indeed for two ſuch friends as he and his cup to part without kiſſing; and then expired. *(q)*

Carolan was buried in the church-yard of Kilronan, in the dioceſe of Ardagh, where his ſkull was lately obſerved rudely ſcattered among the ſpoils of death, and diſtinguiſhed from the vulgar multitude by a ribband appended thereto.—A circumſtance this, which would have animated the genius of a Yorick to the higheſt pitch of elegant enthuſiaſm.

Our Bard was lamented in an humble Elegy, written by his facetious friend and companion, Charles Mac Cabe; but which has no merit to excite the Reader's curioſity.

Carolan left ſix daughters and a ſon; the latter taught the Iriſh harp, and publiſhed a collection of his father's pieces; the moſt favourite of which, with ſeveral others therein omitted, will be found in the following Collection, to the number of more than thirty.

The public opinion of Carolan's merit, and the eſteem in which he is held by the moſt eminent Profeſſors, may be inferred from the inſertion of ſo many of his pieces in our modern operas and entertainments.

Before we conclude this Eſſay, the Reader may expect ſome information as to the other airs which form this Collection. Many of them indeed are well known, and have long been favourites with the public: but of ſome others, there are a few particulars too curious to be withheld.

The *Dump*, or Melancholy Tune, No. II. is ſaid to have been ſung by the Iriſh women on the field of battle, after a terrible ſlaughter made by the Iriſh women on the field of battle, after a terrible ſlaughter made by Cromwell's troops, in Ireland.—No. LIV. was compoſed in the reign of Henry VIII. the original words being in honour of the ancient Iriſh dreſs.—No. XCI. is commonly ſung by the Iriſh Ruſtics, at the plough.—No. IX. XXIX. and ſeveral others, are remarkable for their high antiquity, as well as beautiful ſimplicity.

It need only be added, that great pains have been taken to make the baſſes as familiar and pleaſing as circumſtances would admit. Several of the airs have never appeared with any accompaniment before, and many of them would not admit a ſtrict conformity to modern rules. This may be proper to be obſerved, that the *Editor* may not be condemned for violating rules which could not be conformed to with propriety; and to which no experienced Muſician would attempt to reduce airs compoſed before the laws of Harmony were known.

(q) Goldſmith's Life of Carolan, European Mag. for October, 1785.

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☞ *The Tunes diſtinguiſhed by an * in this Index were compoſed by* CAROLAN.

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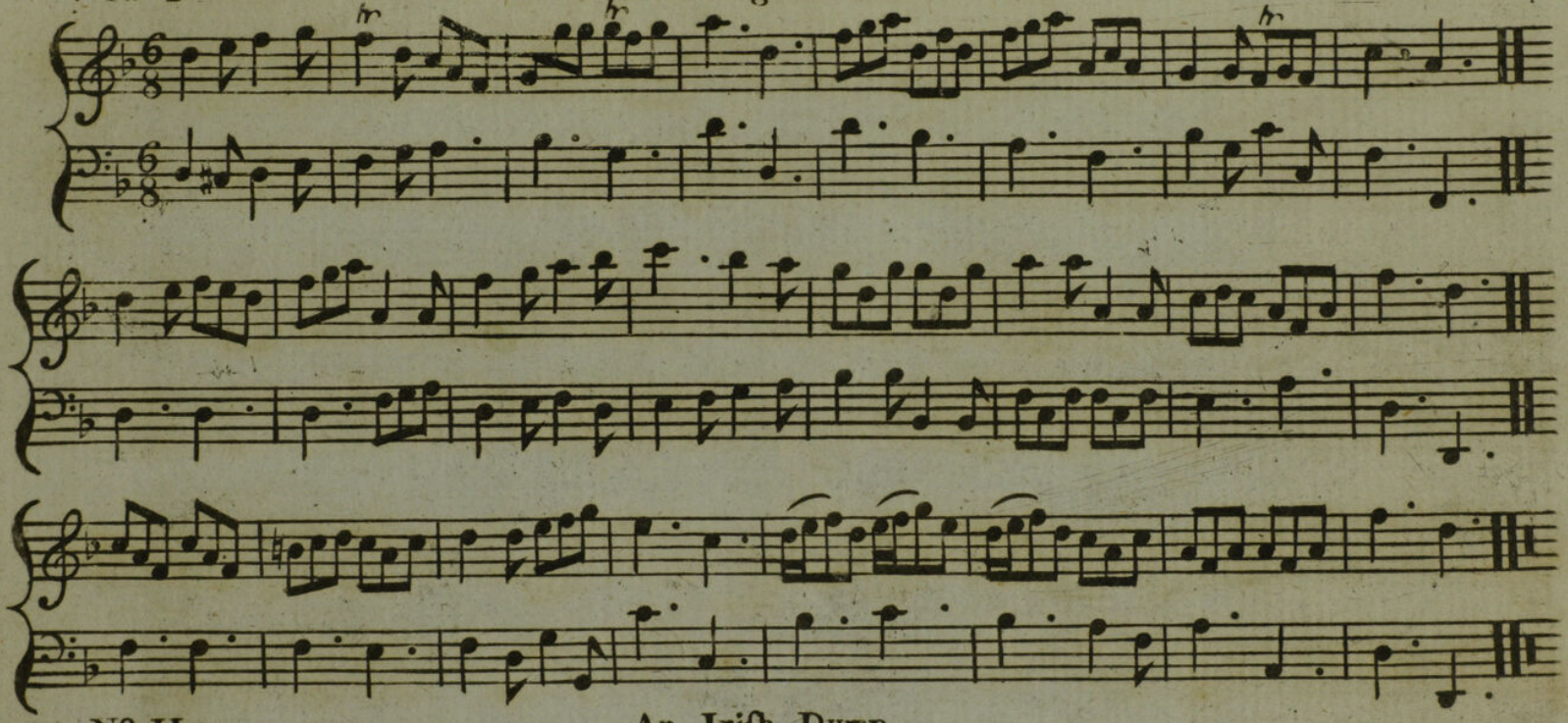
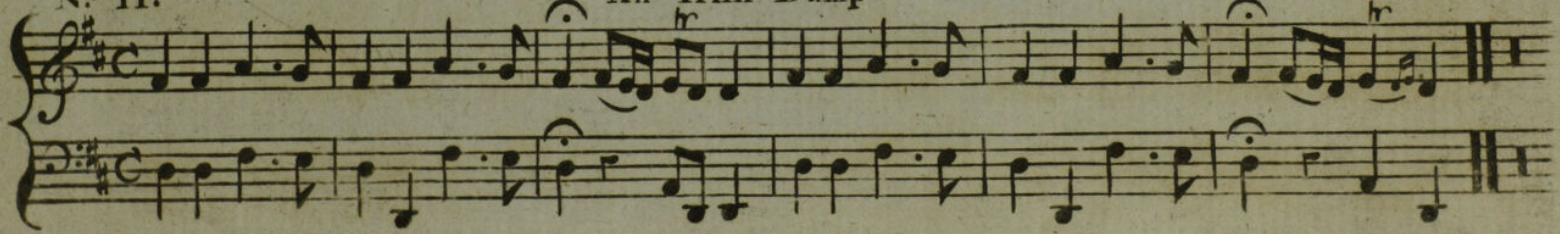
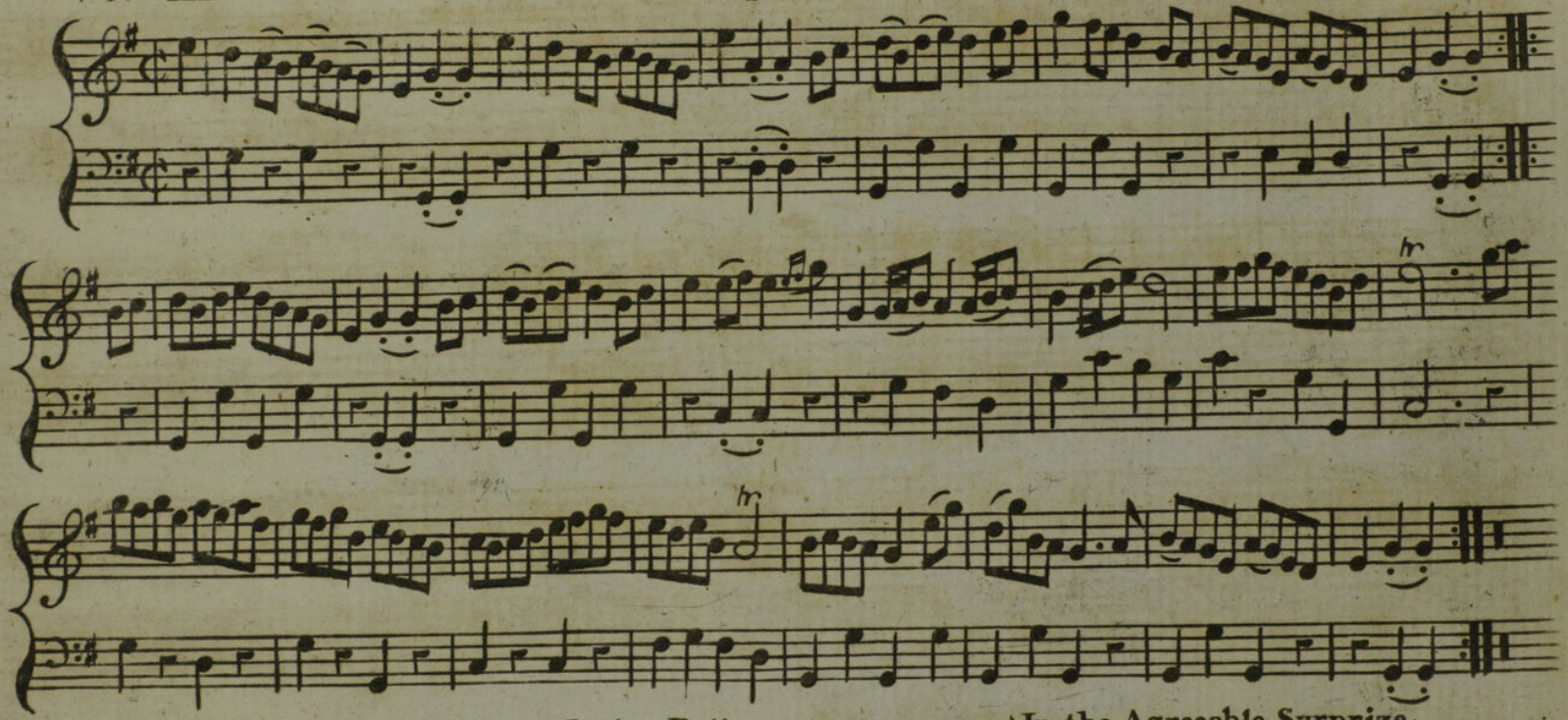
No I. John Nugent. Carolan.



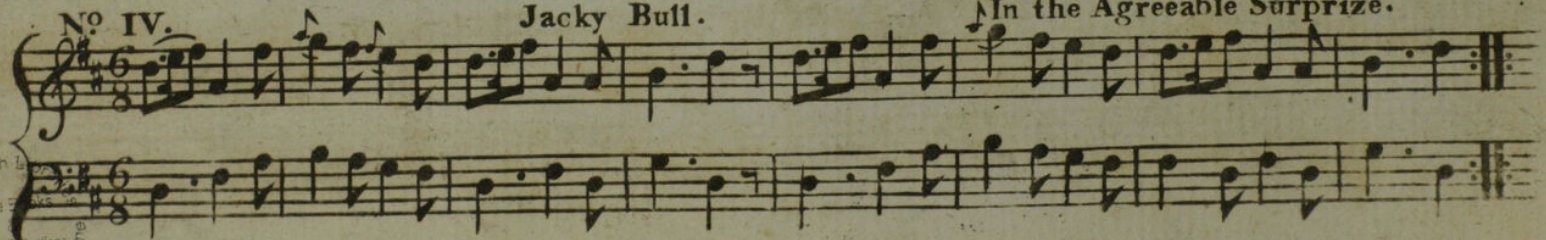
No II. An Iriſh Dump.



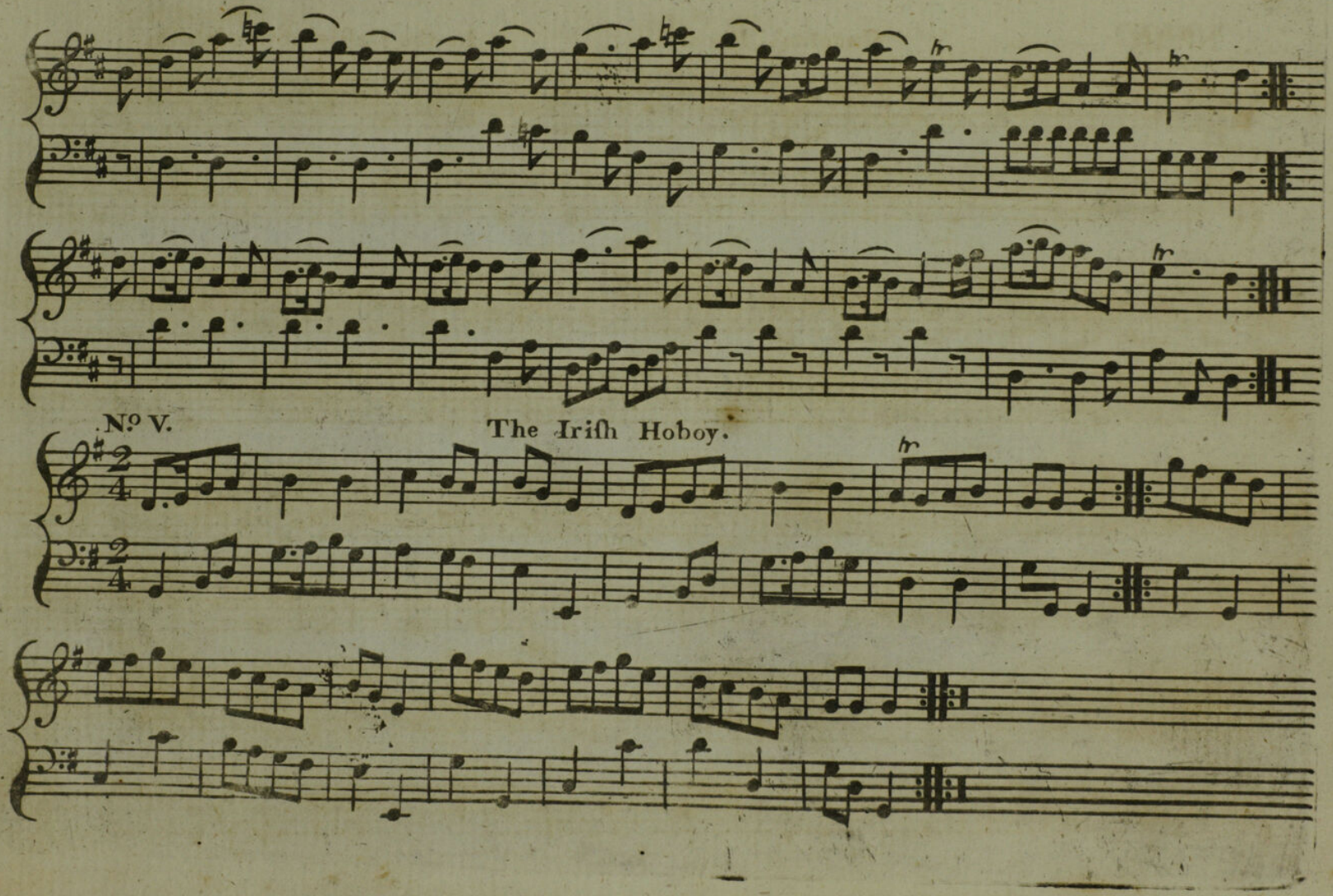
Nº III. Carolan's Receipt. In the Caſtle of Andaluſia.



Nº IV. Jacky Bull. In the Agreeable Surprize.



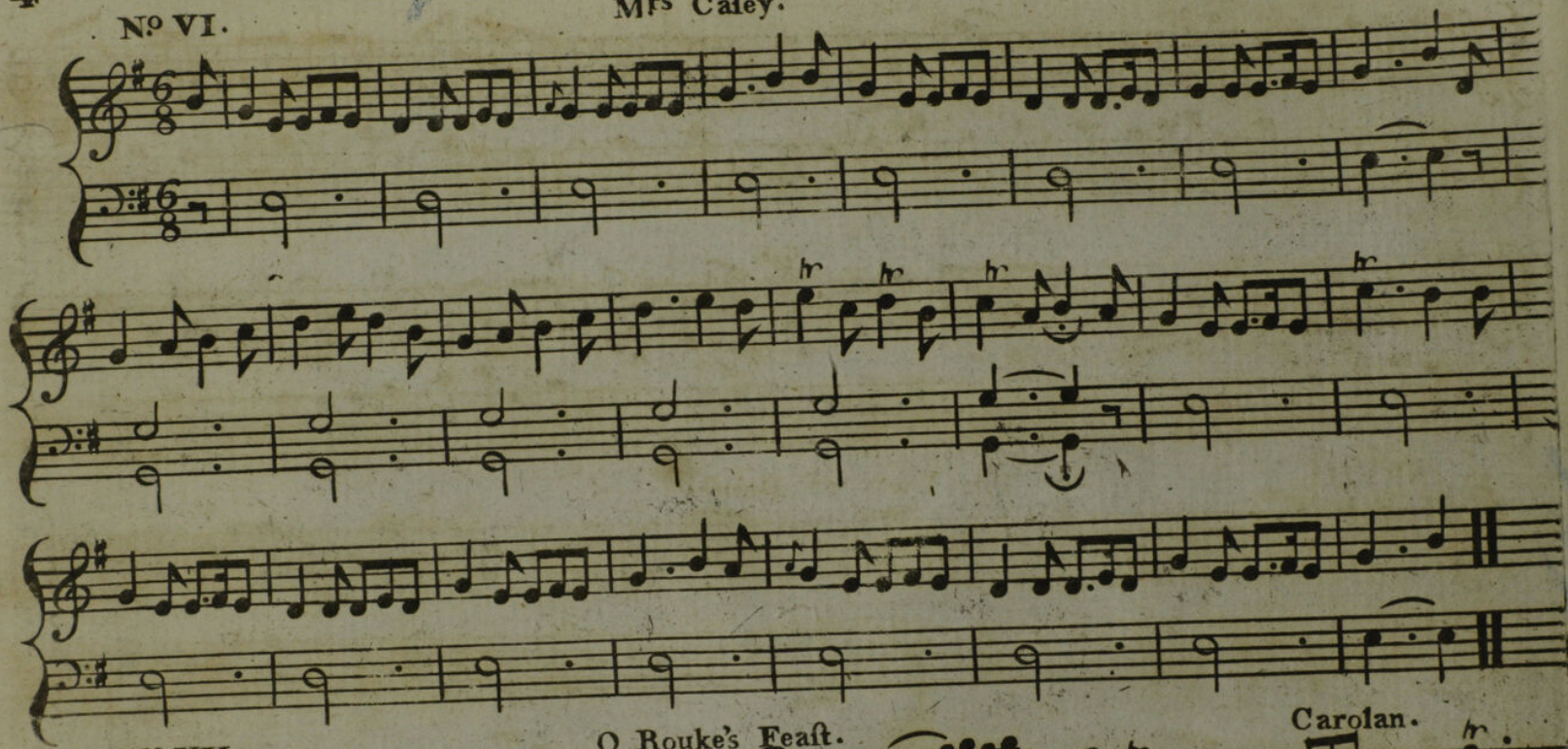
Special Collections University of Notre Dame



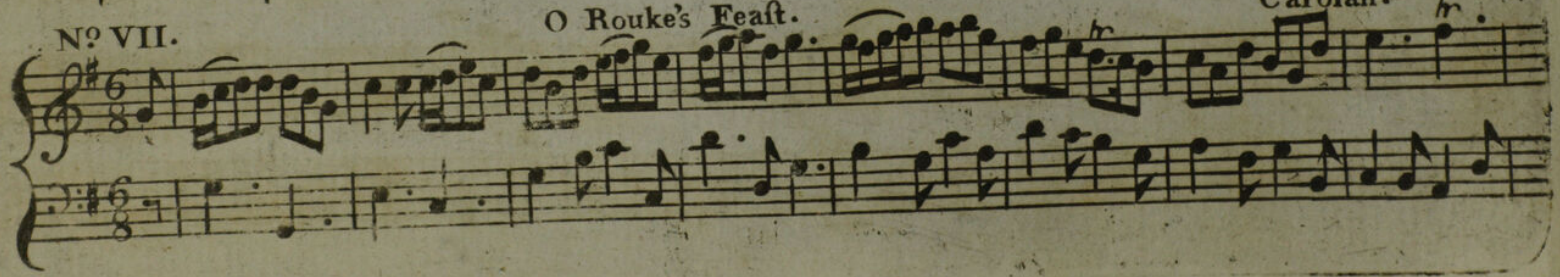
No. V.

The Iriſh Hoboy.

Nº VI. Mrs Casey. In Fontainbleau.



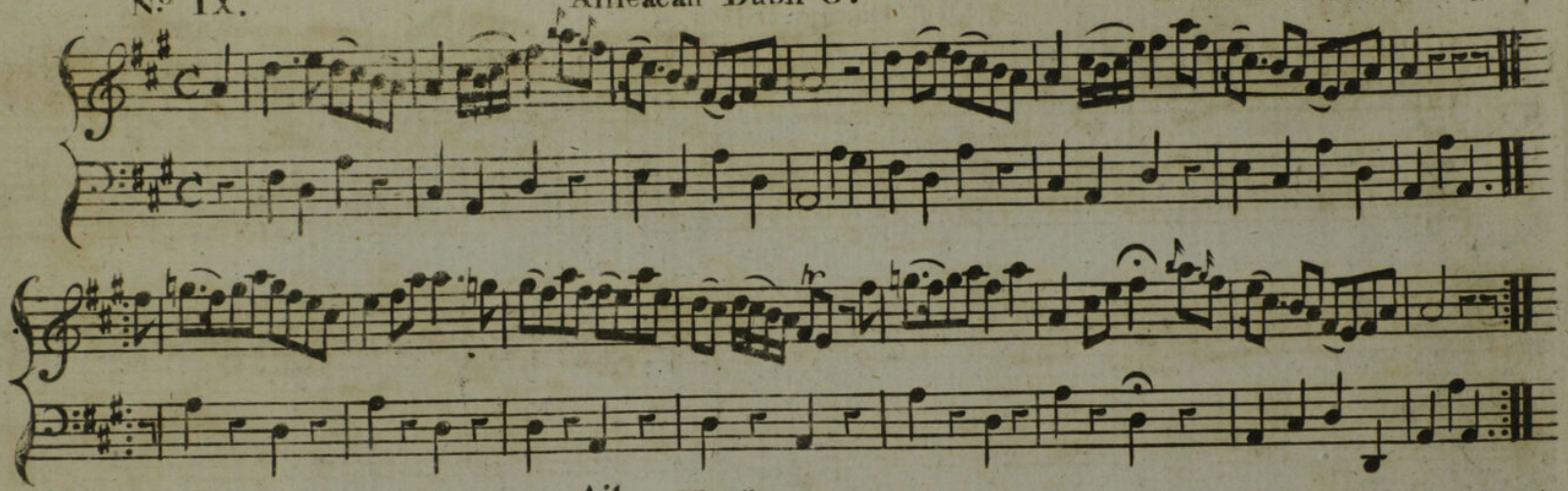
Nº VII. O Rouke's Feast. Carolan.



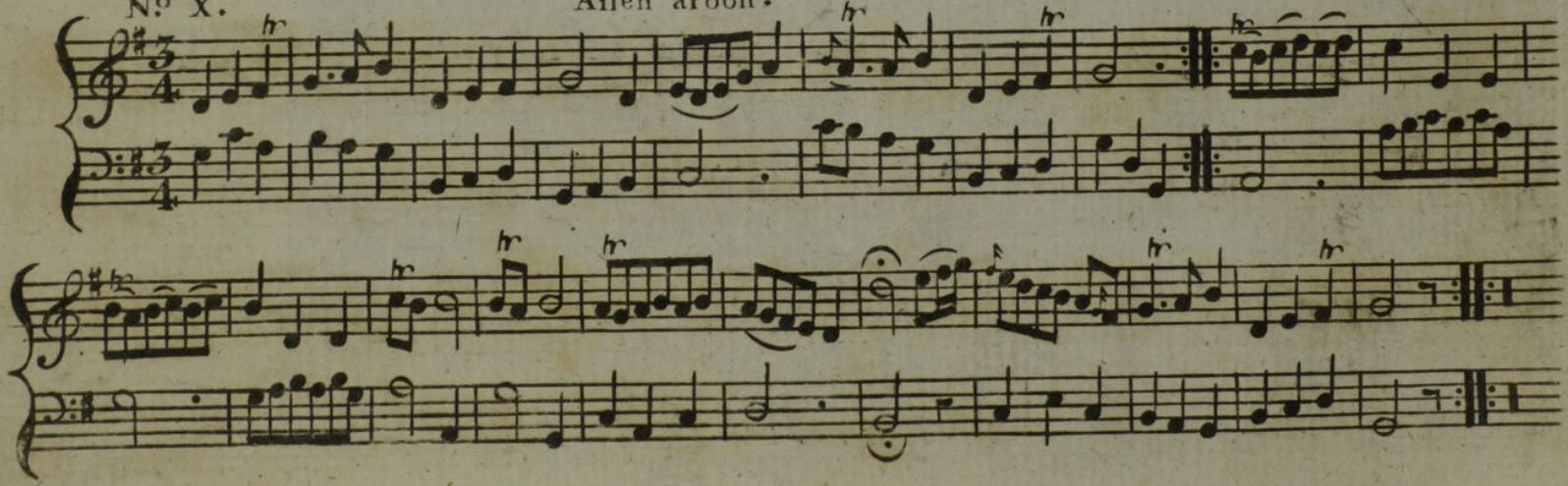
G.F.

Nº VIII. The Lads of Dunſe.

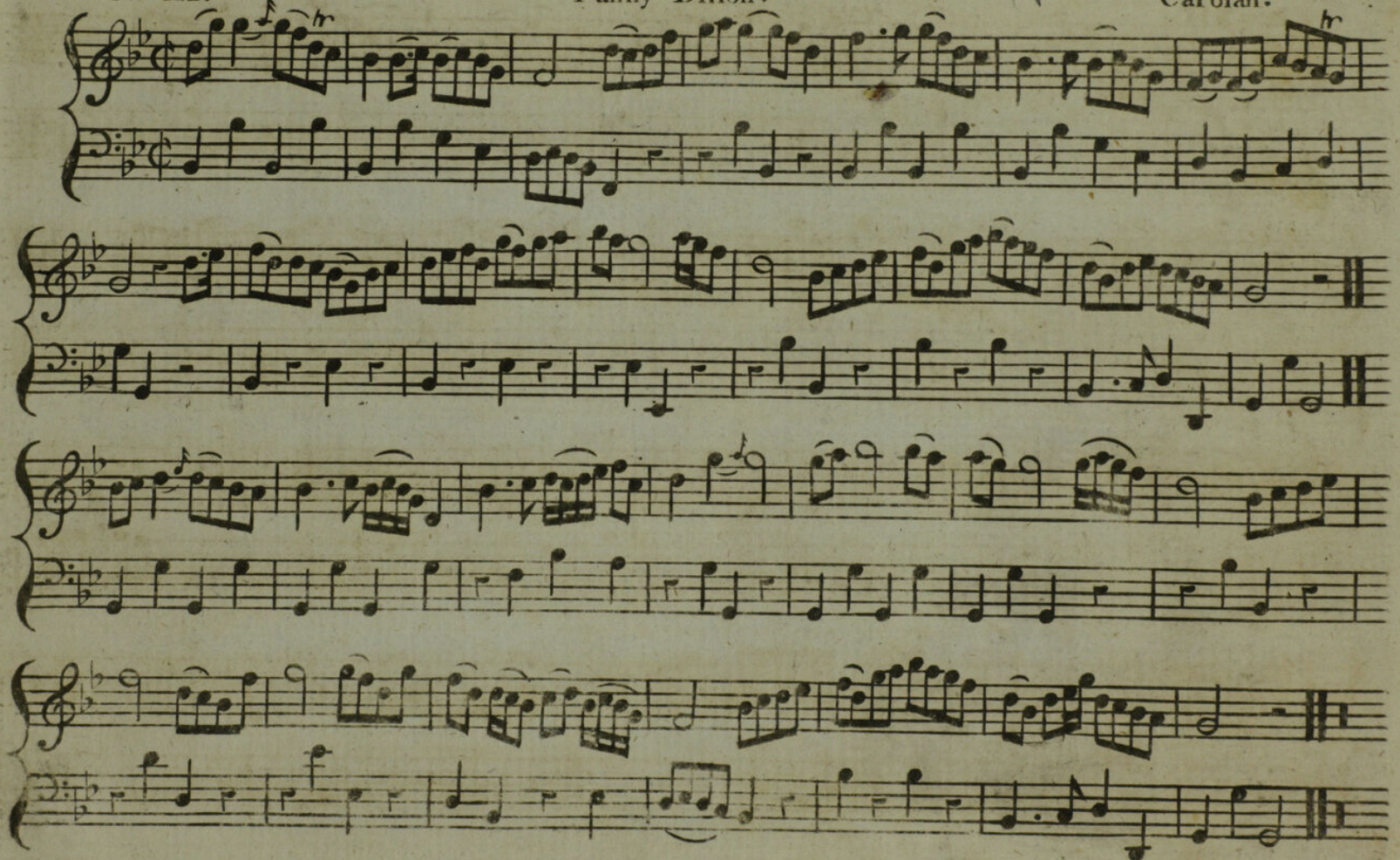
Nº IX. Ailleacan Dubh O! In the Poor Soldier.



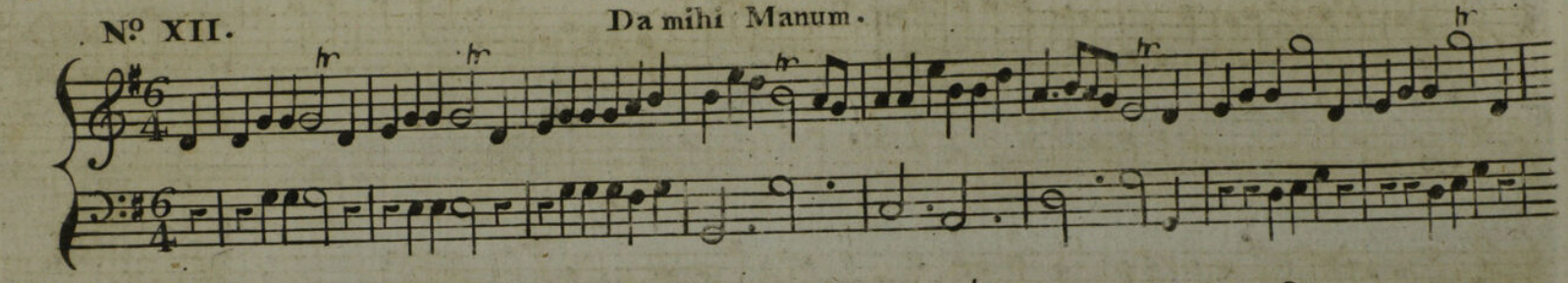
Nº X. Ailen aroon.

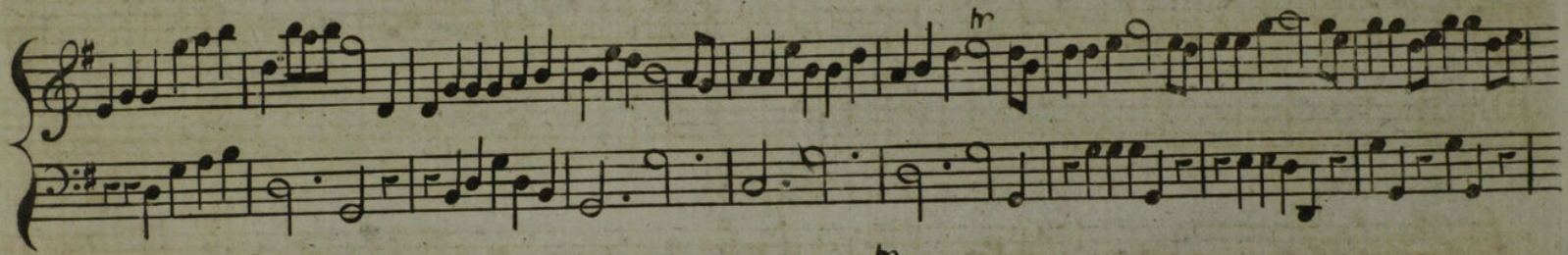


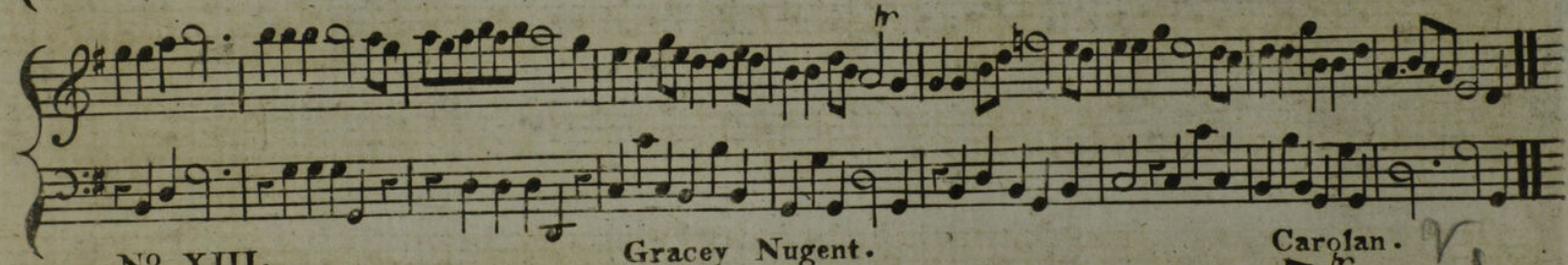
Nº XI. Fanny Dillon. Carolan.



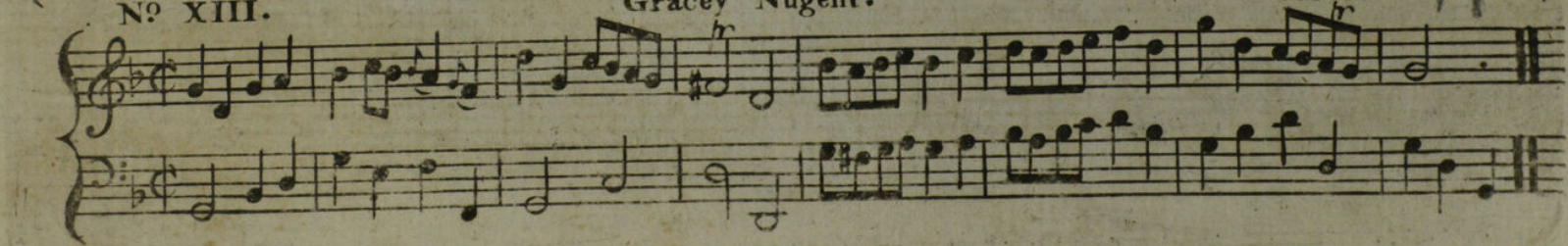
Nº XII. Da mihi Manum.

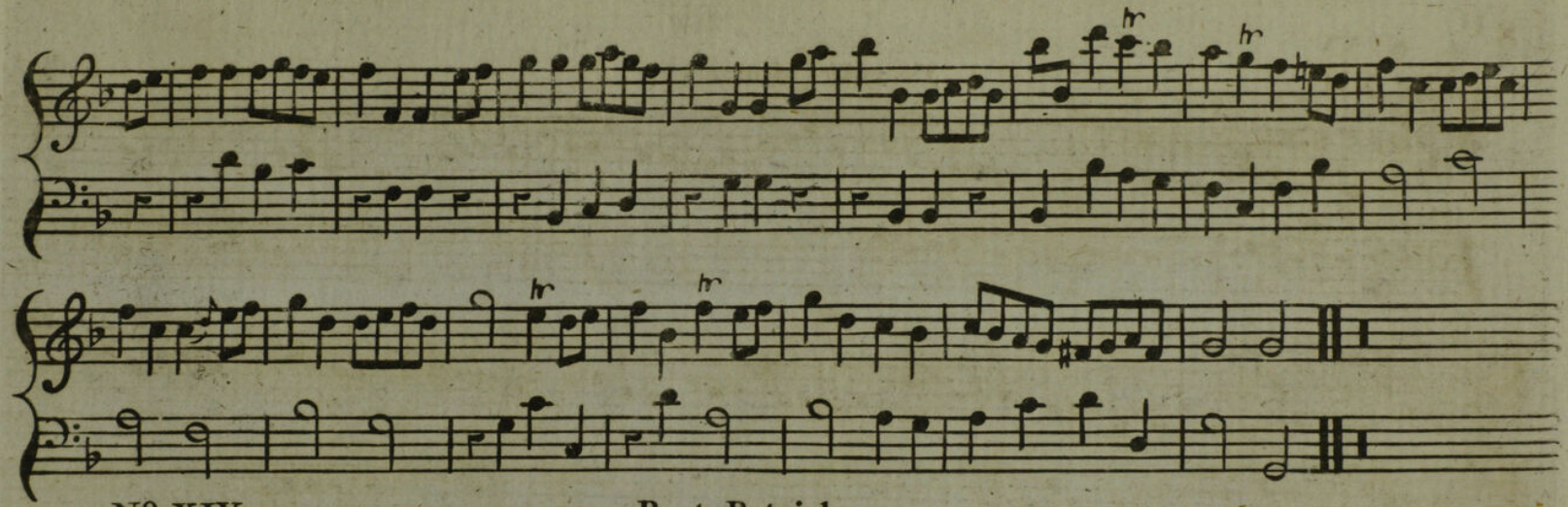




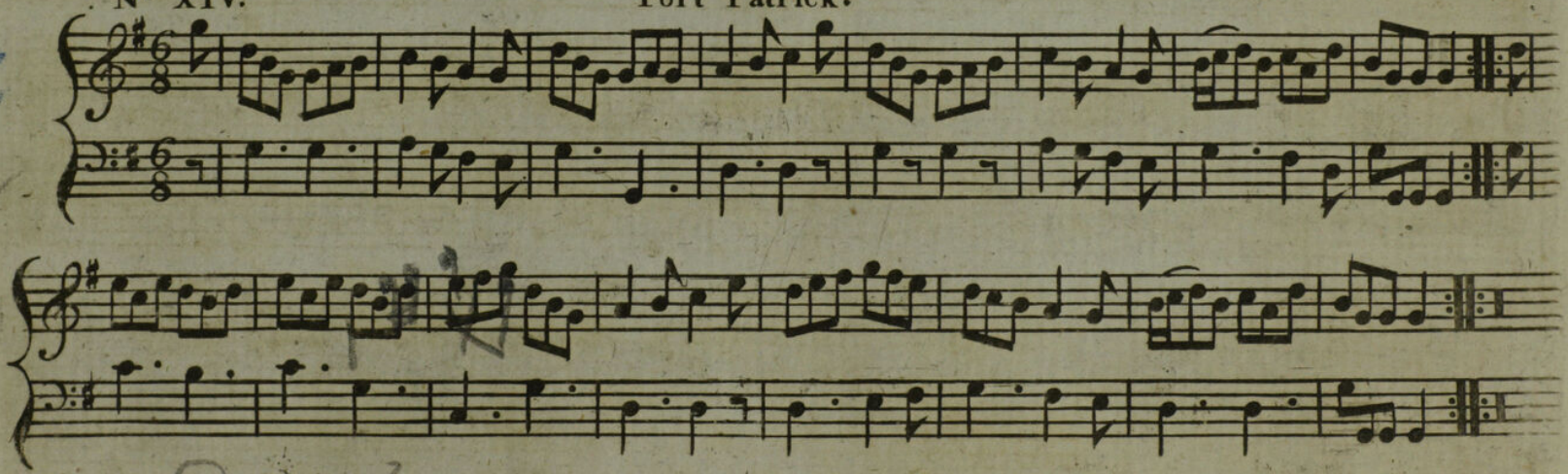


Nº XIII. Gracey Nugent. Carolan.



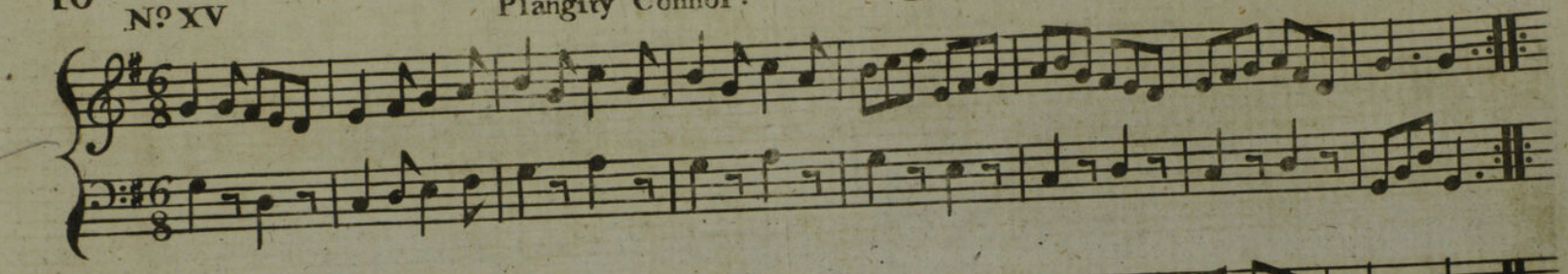


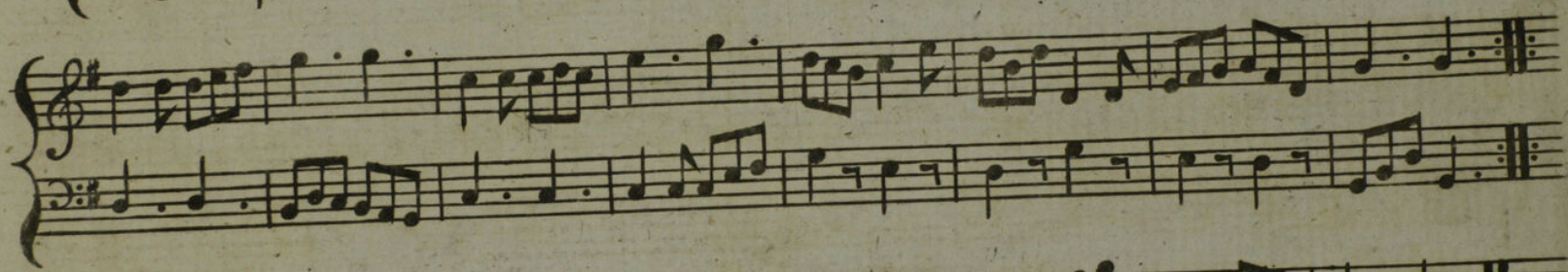
Nº XIV. Port Patrick.

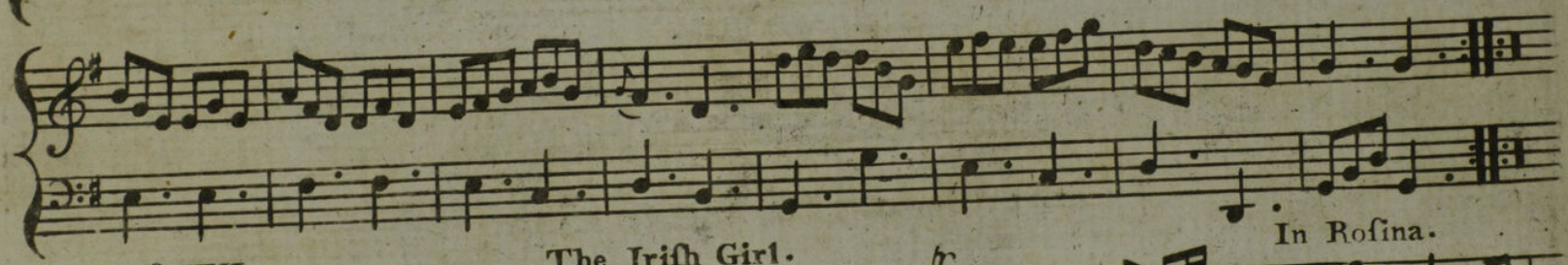


Nº XV

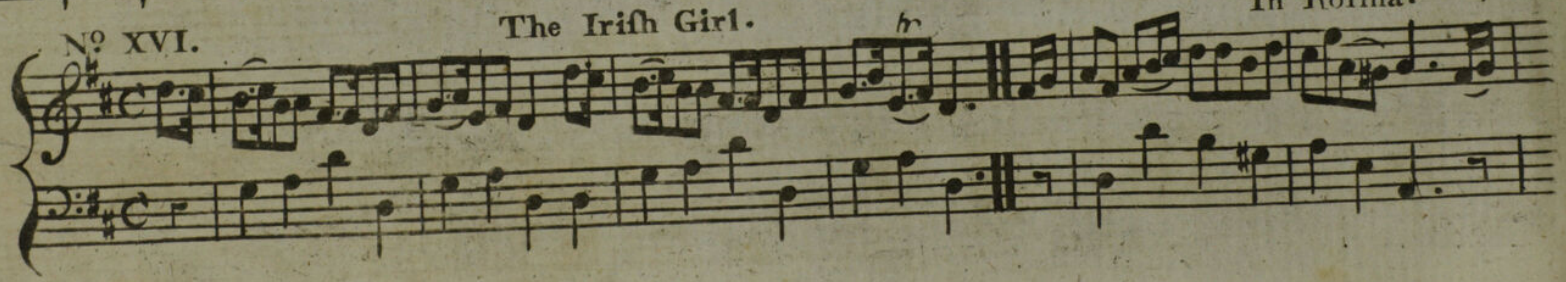
Plangsty Connor. In the Poor Soldier. Carolan.

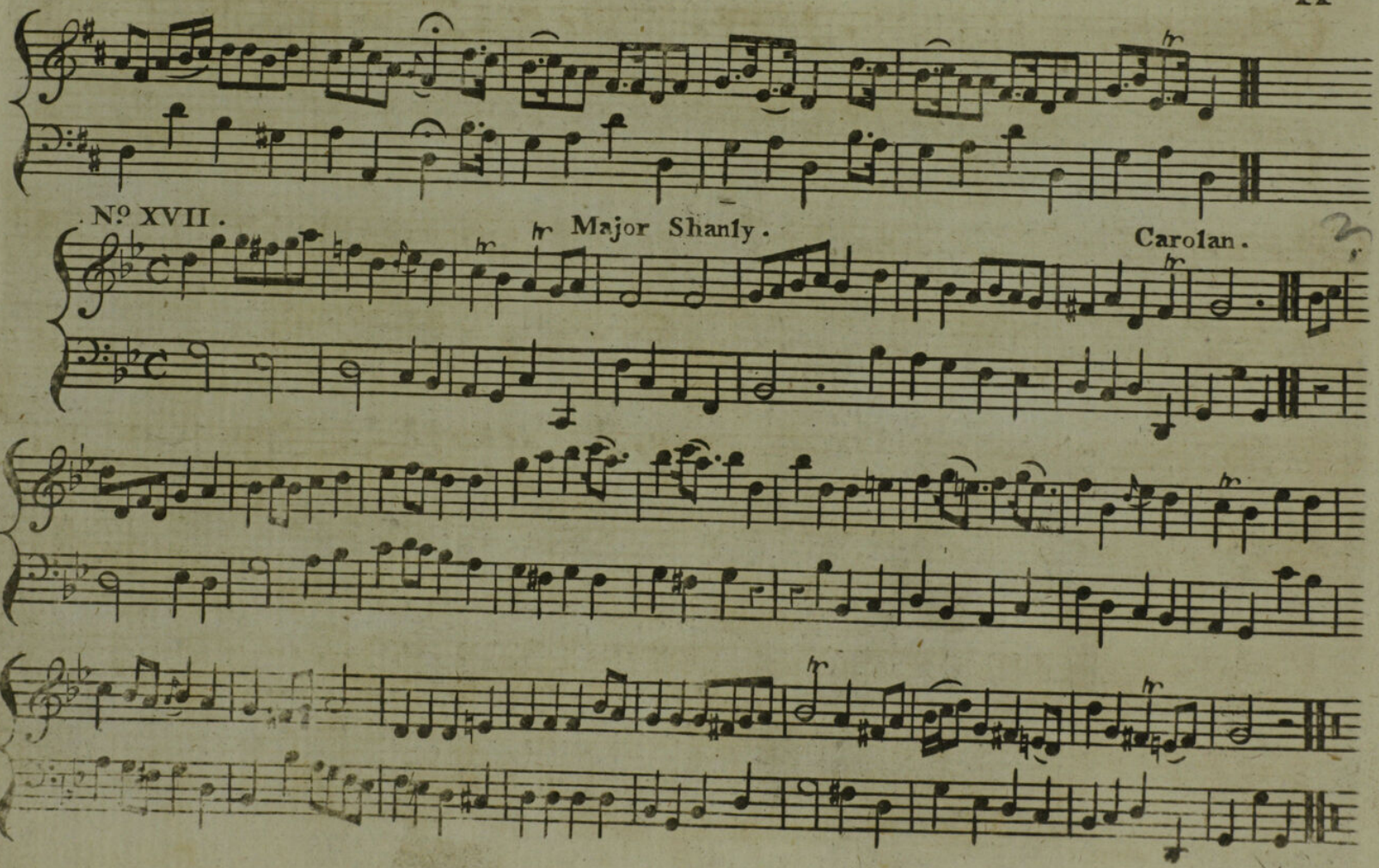




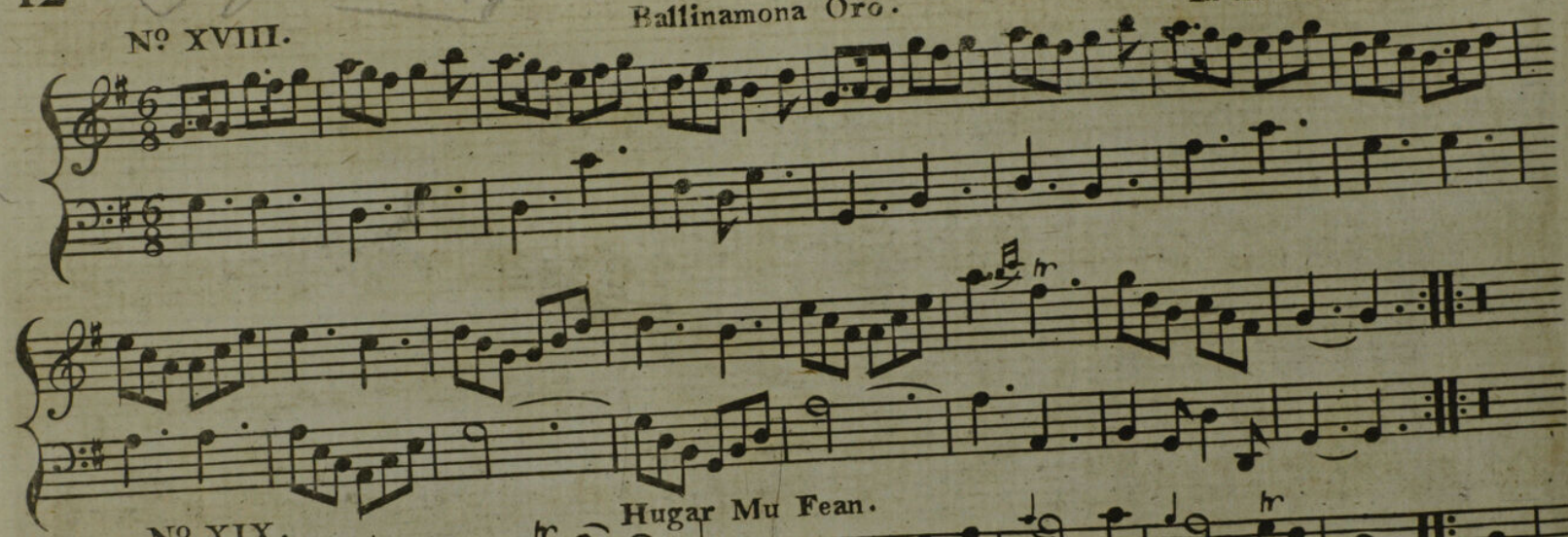


Nº XVI. The Irish Girl. In Rosina.

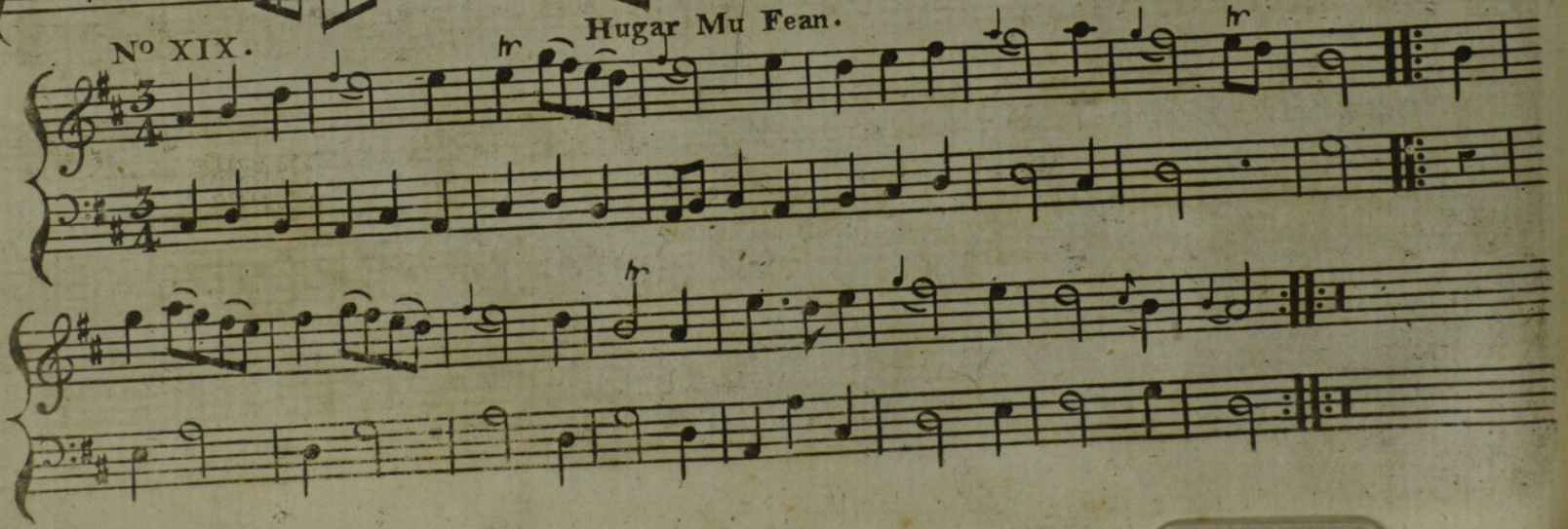



N.º XVII.
Major Shanly.
Carolan.

Nº XVIII. Ballinamona Oro. In the Poor Soldier.



Nº XIX. Hugar Mu Fean.



Nº XX.

Toby Peyton.

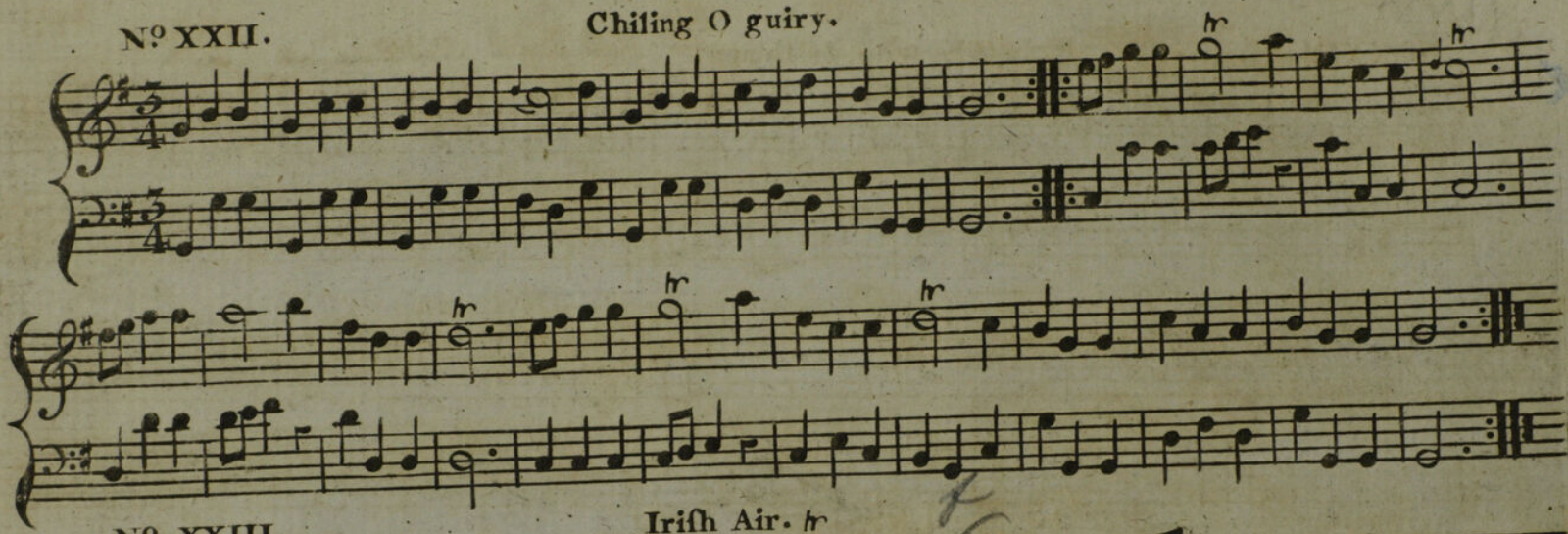
Carolan.

Nº XXI.

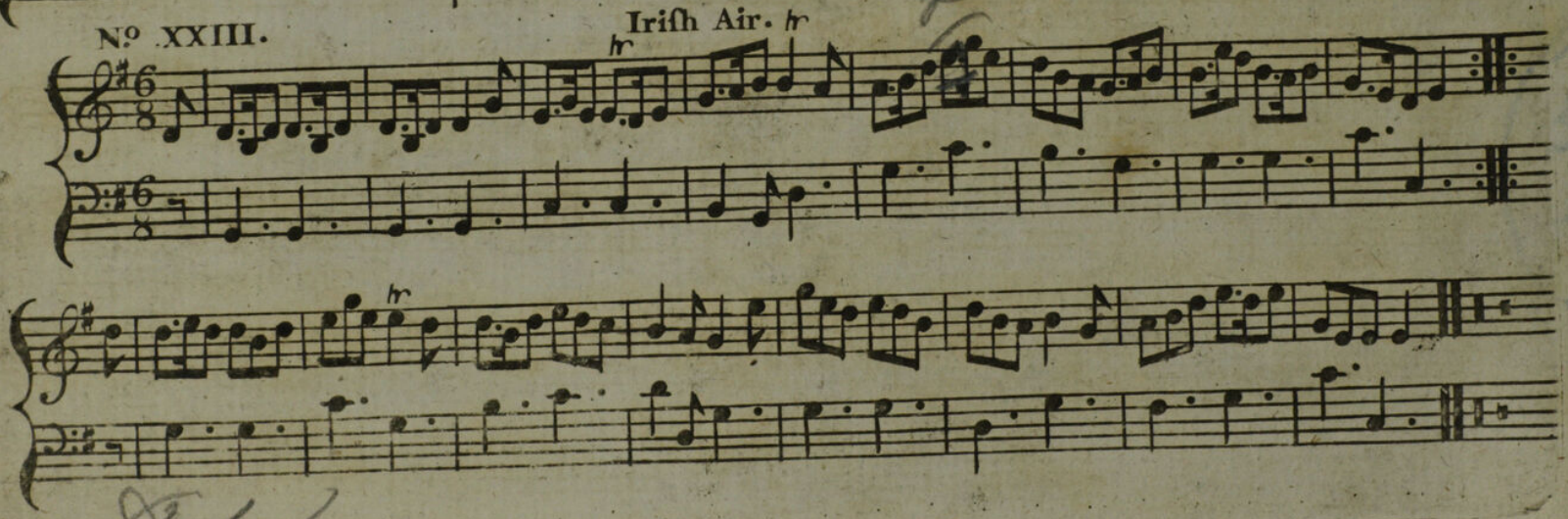
Irish Trott.

In the Beggars Opera.

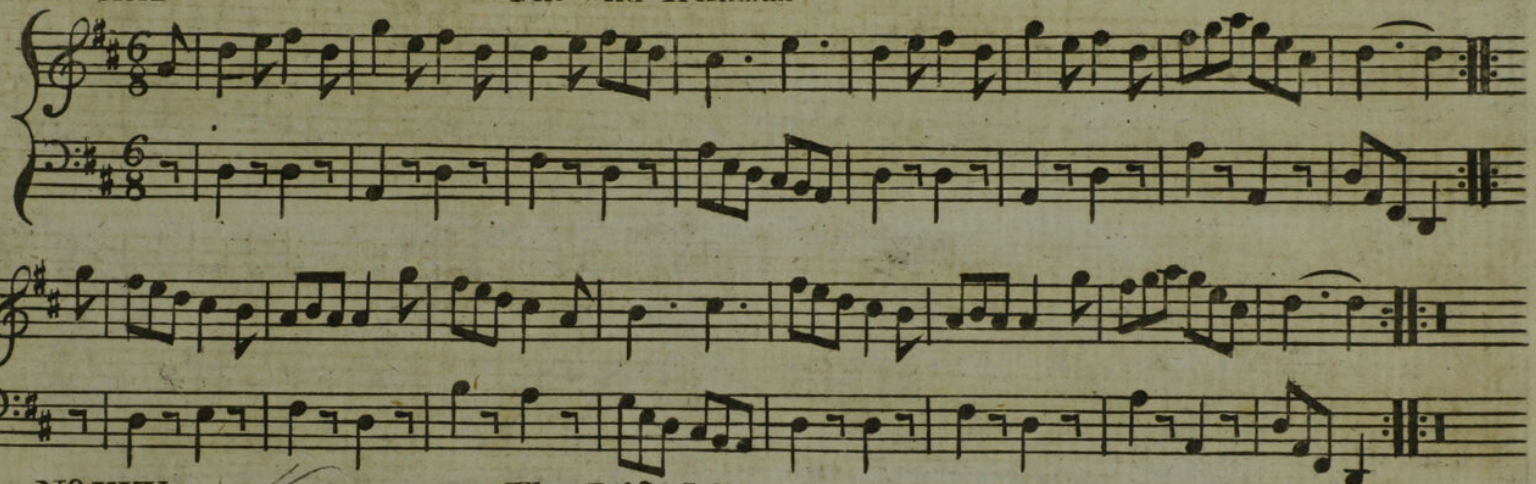
Nº XXII. Chiling O guiry.



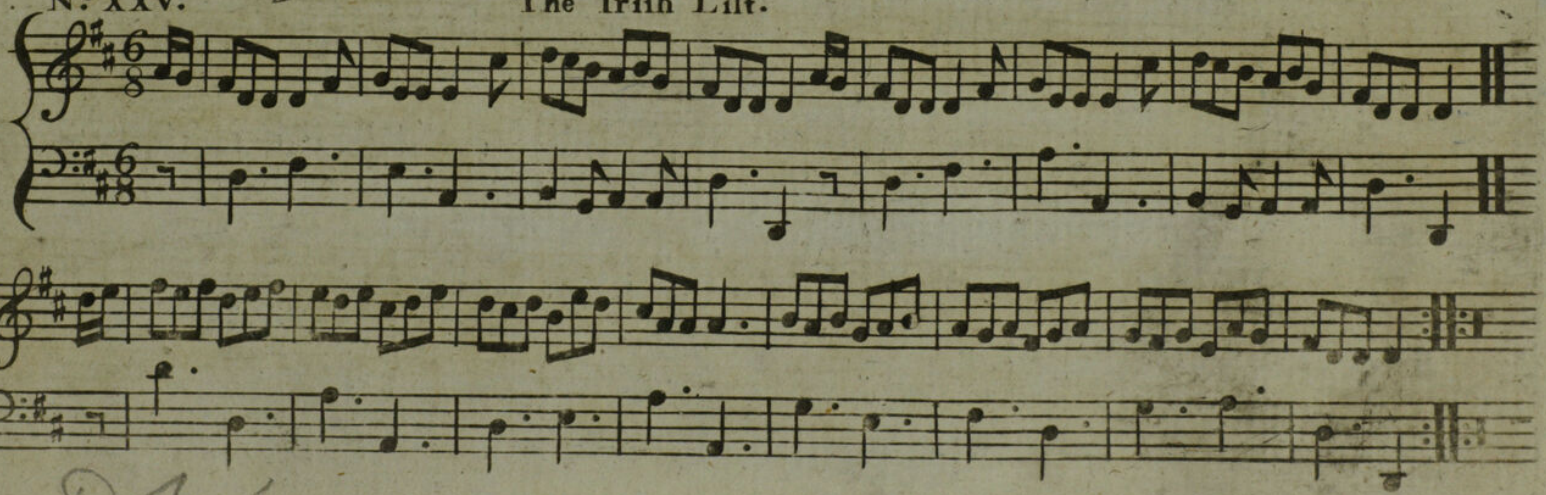
Nº XXIII. Iriſh Air.



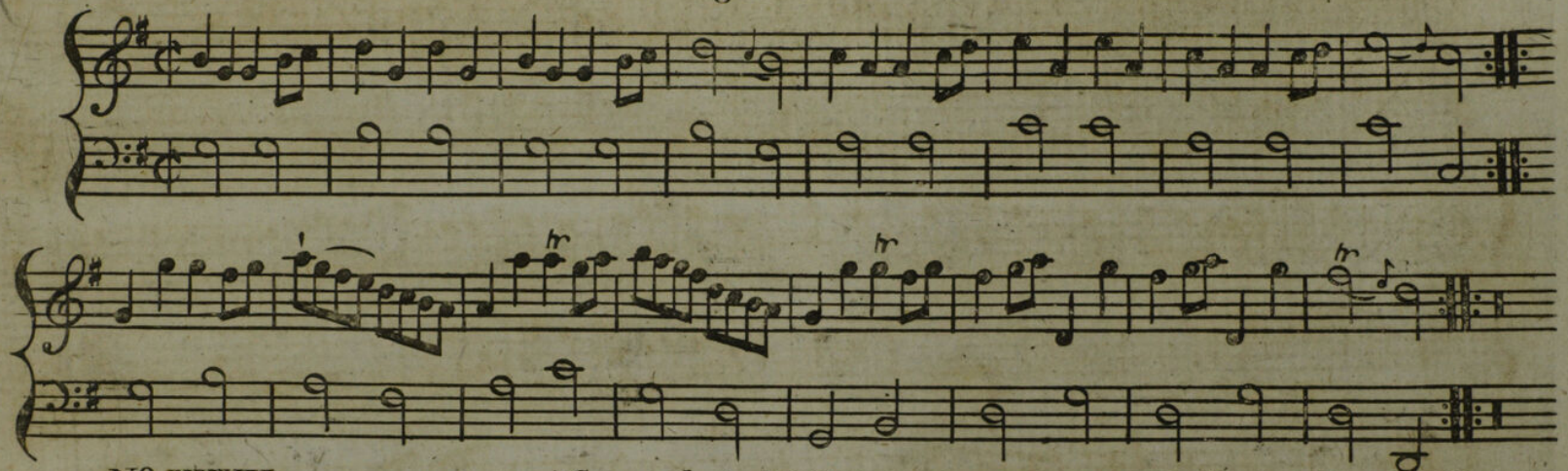
Nº XXIV. The wild Iriſhman.



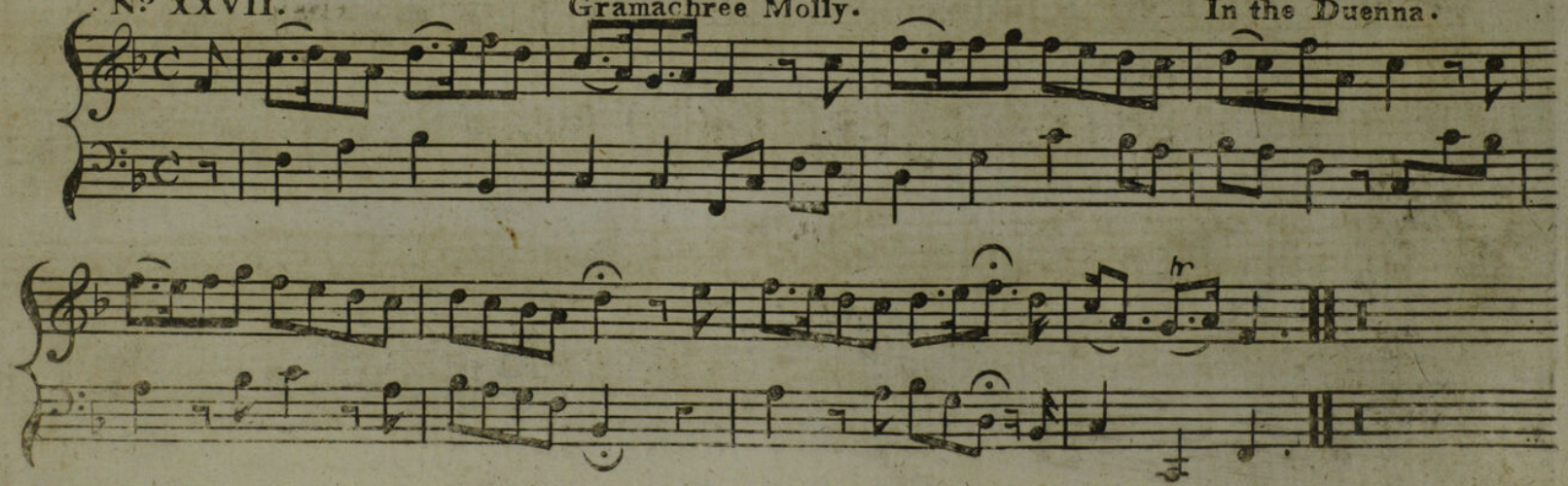
Nº XXV. The Iriſh Lilt.



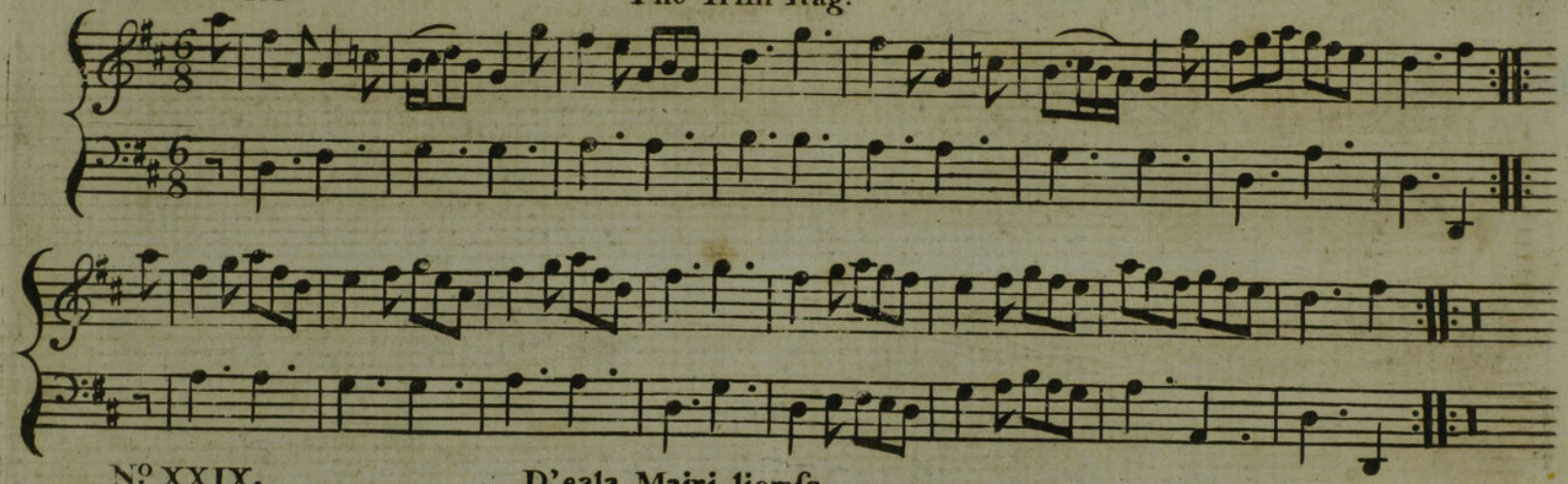
Nº XXVI. The Fingalians' Dance.



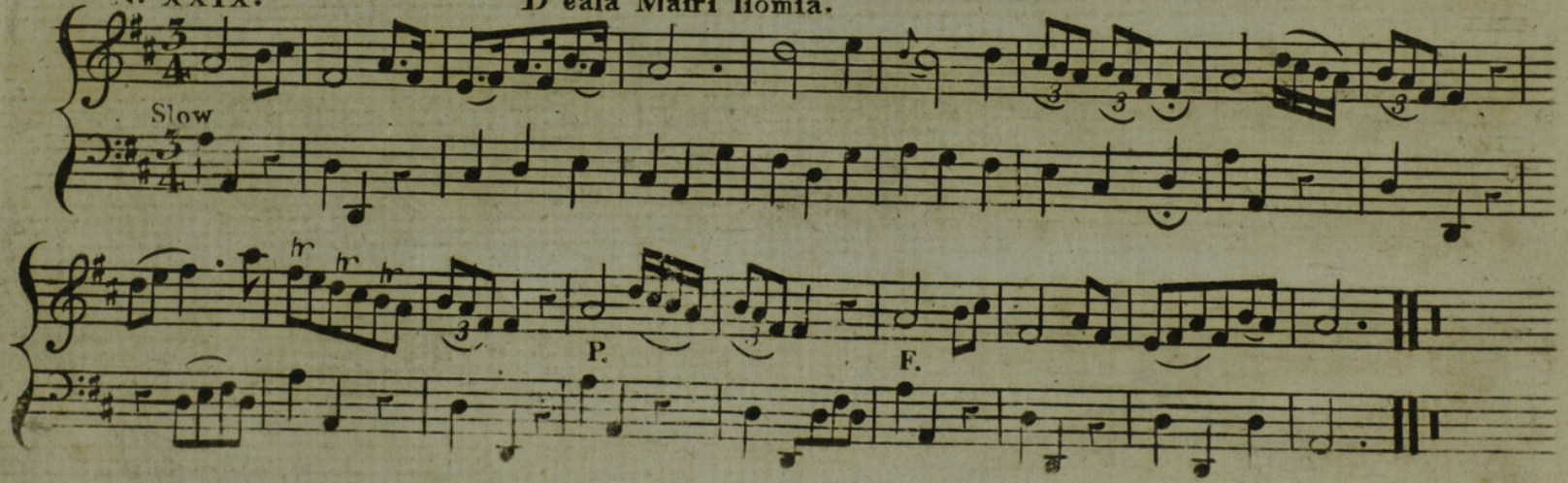
Nº XXVII. Gramachree Molly. In the Duenna.



Nº XXVIII. The Iriſh Rag.



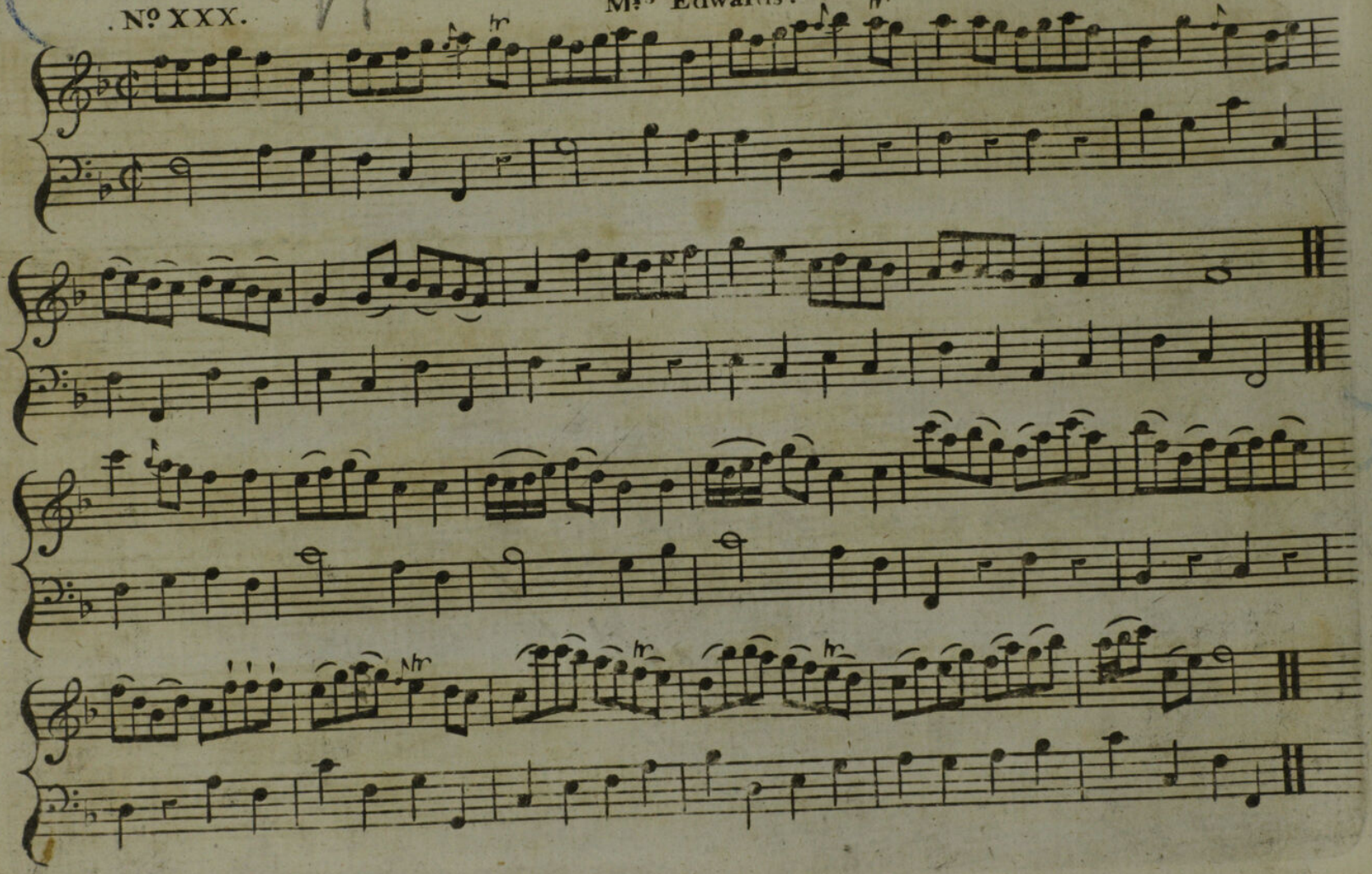
Nº XXIX. D'eala Mairi liomſa.



No XXX.

Mrs Edwards.

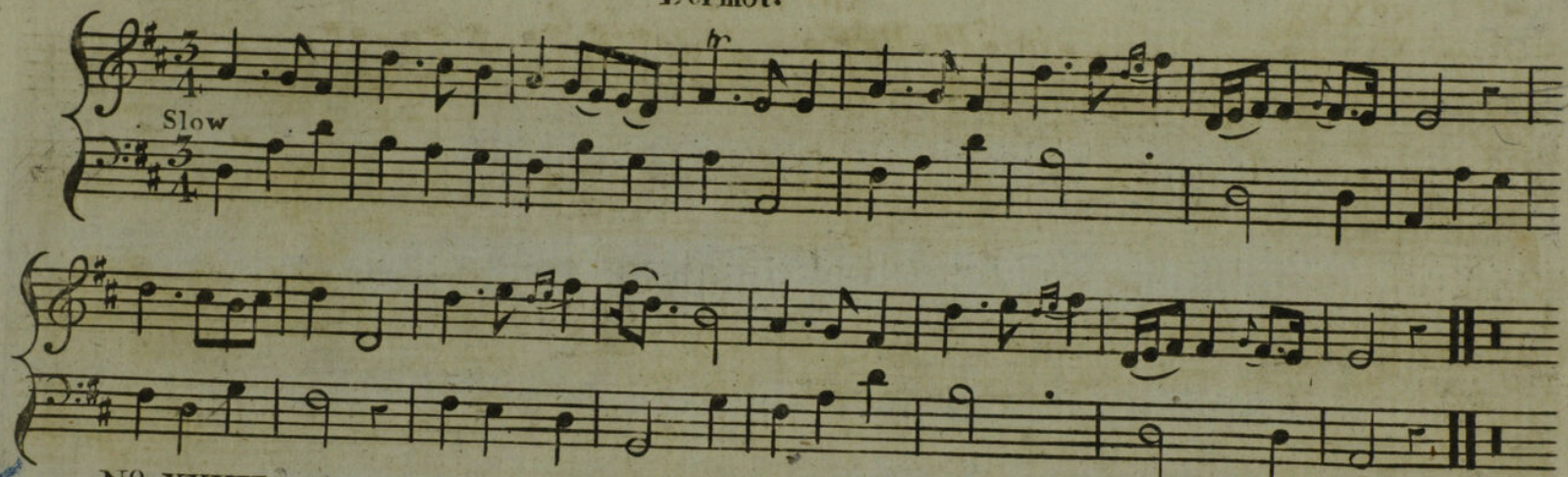
Carolan.



Nº XXXI.

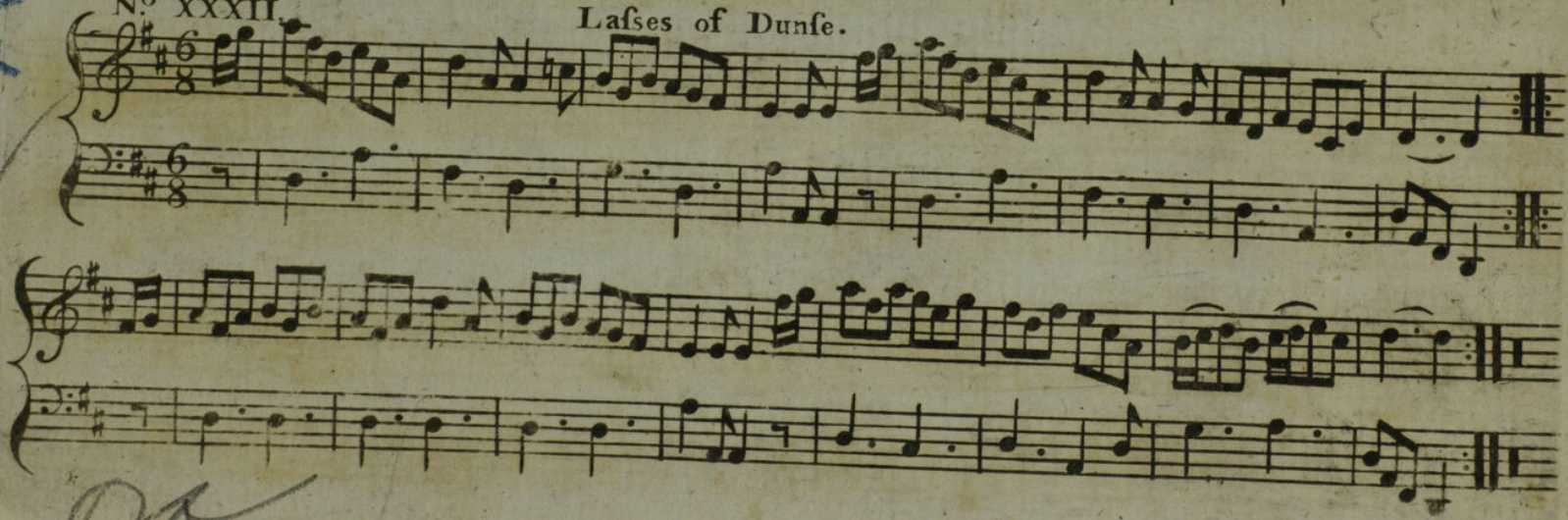
Dermot.

Slow



Nº XXXII.

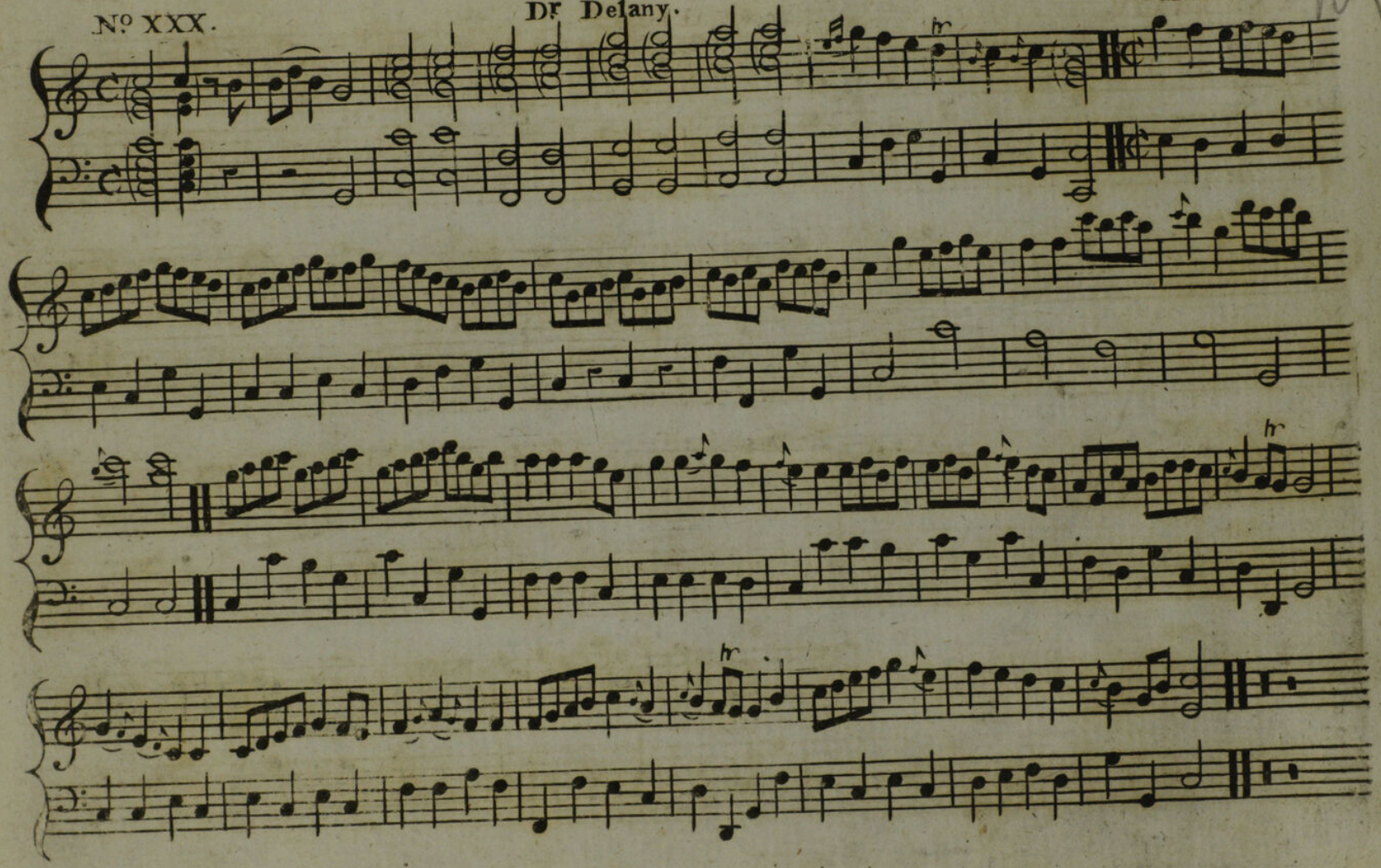
Laſses of Dunſe.

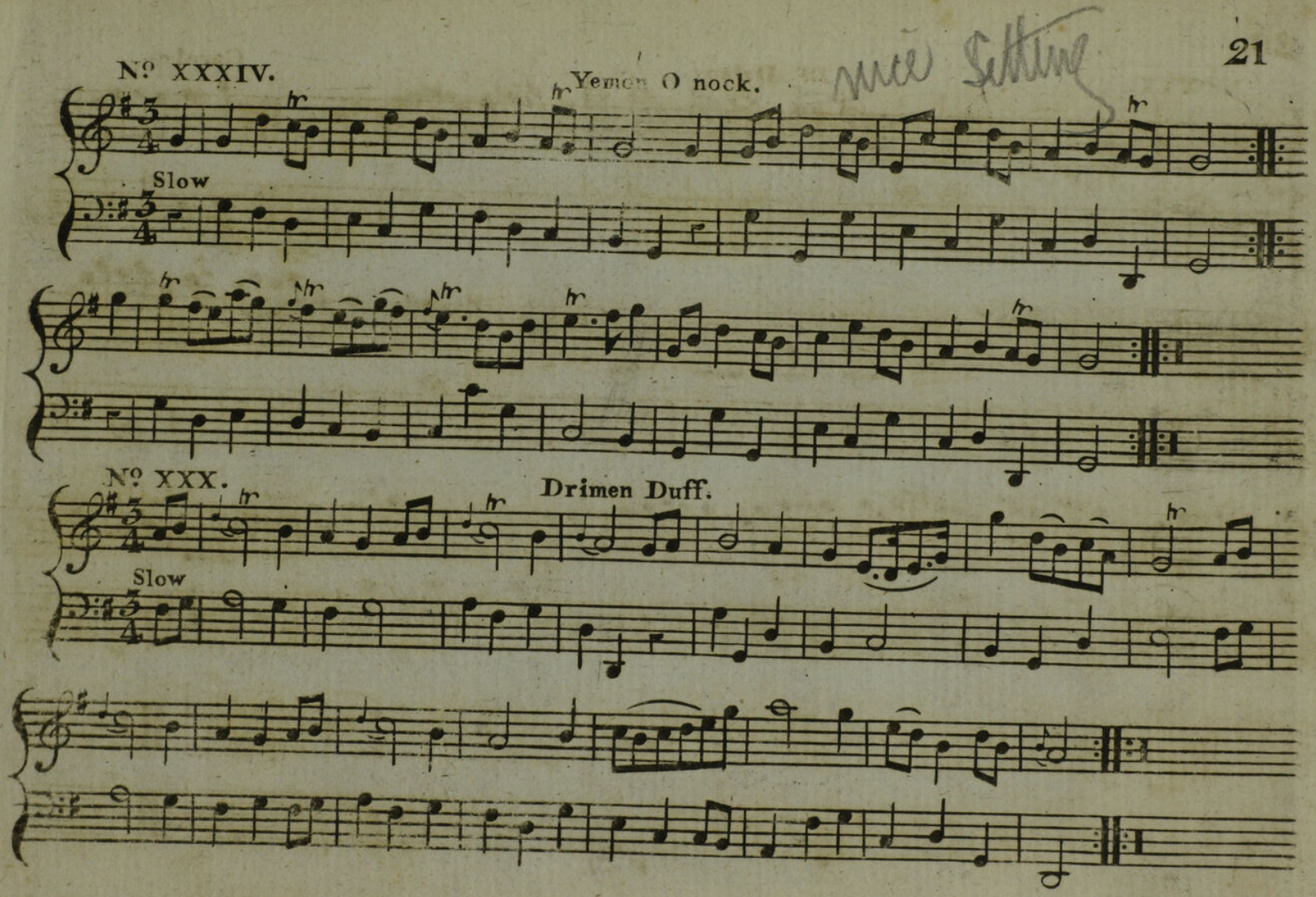


Nº XXX.

Dr Delany.

Carolan.

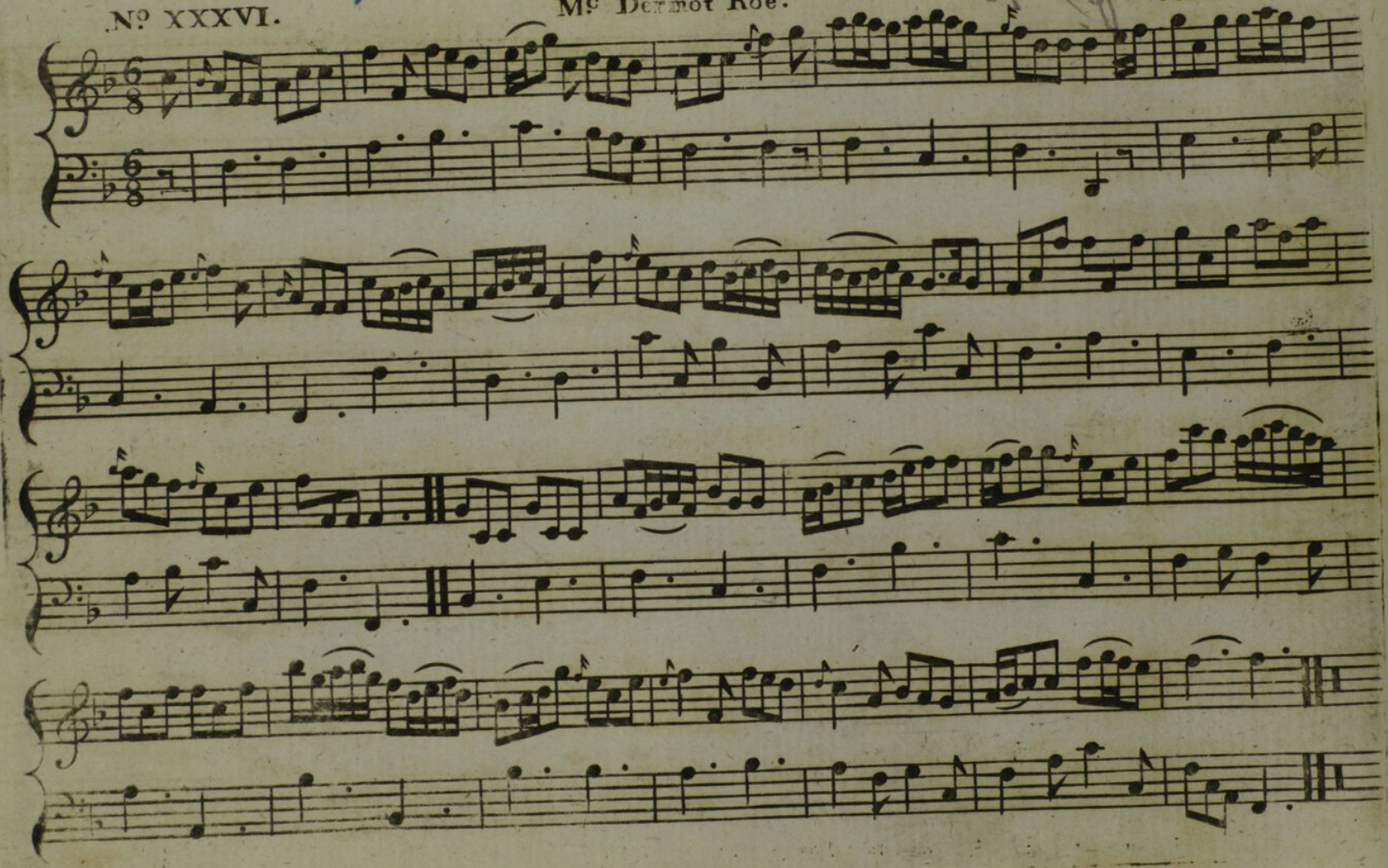



Nº XXXIV.
Yemen O nock.
Slow
Nº XXX.
Drimen Duff.
Slow

Nº XXXVI.

Mc Dermot Roe.

Carolan.



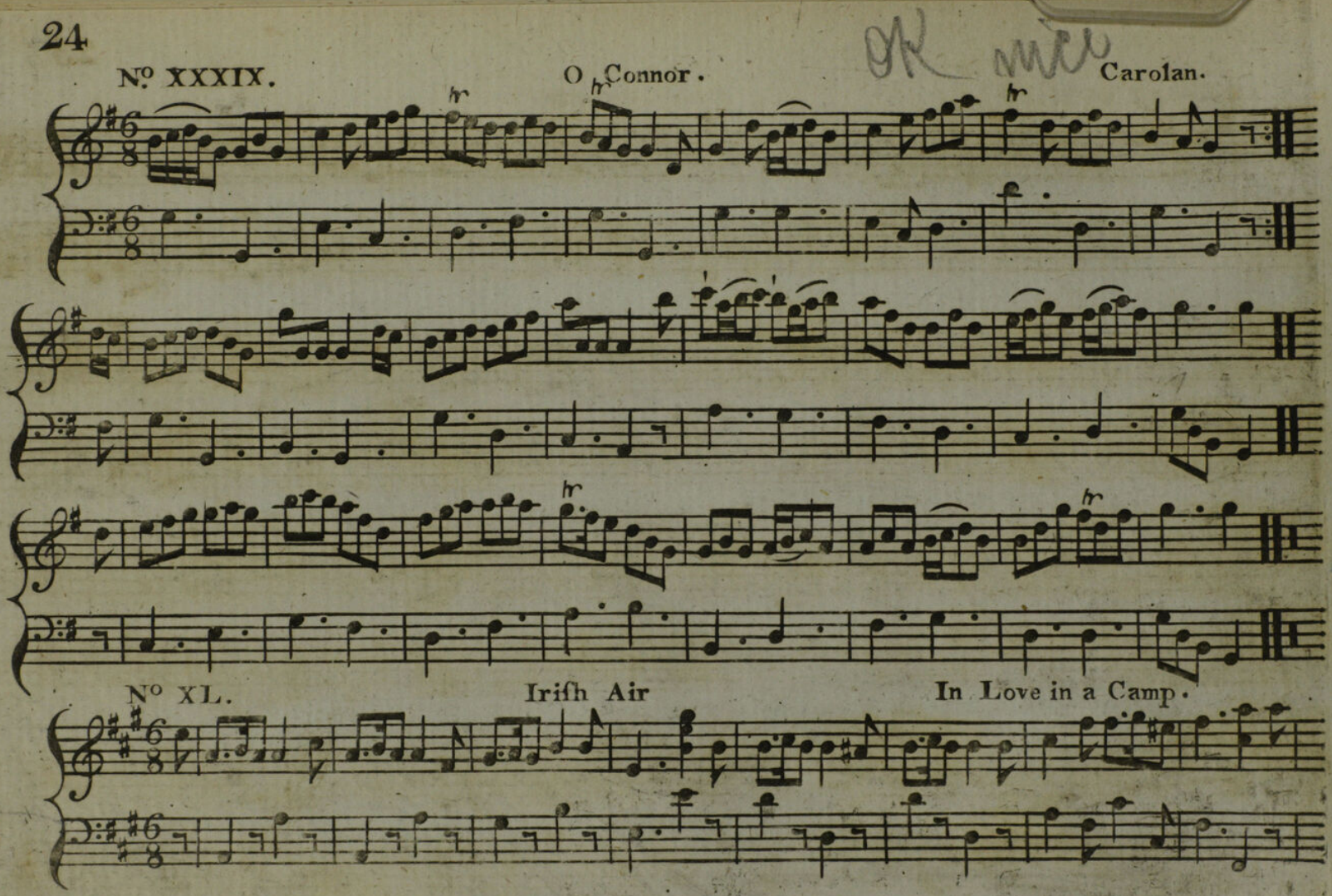
No XXXVII. Lary Grogan.

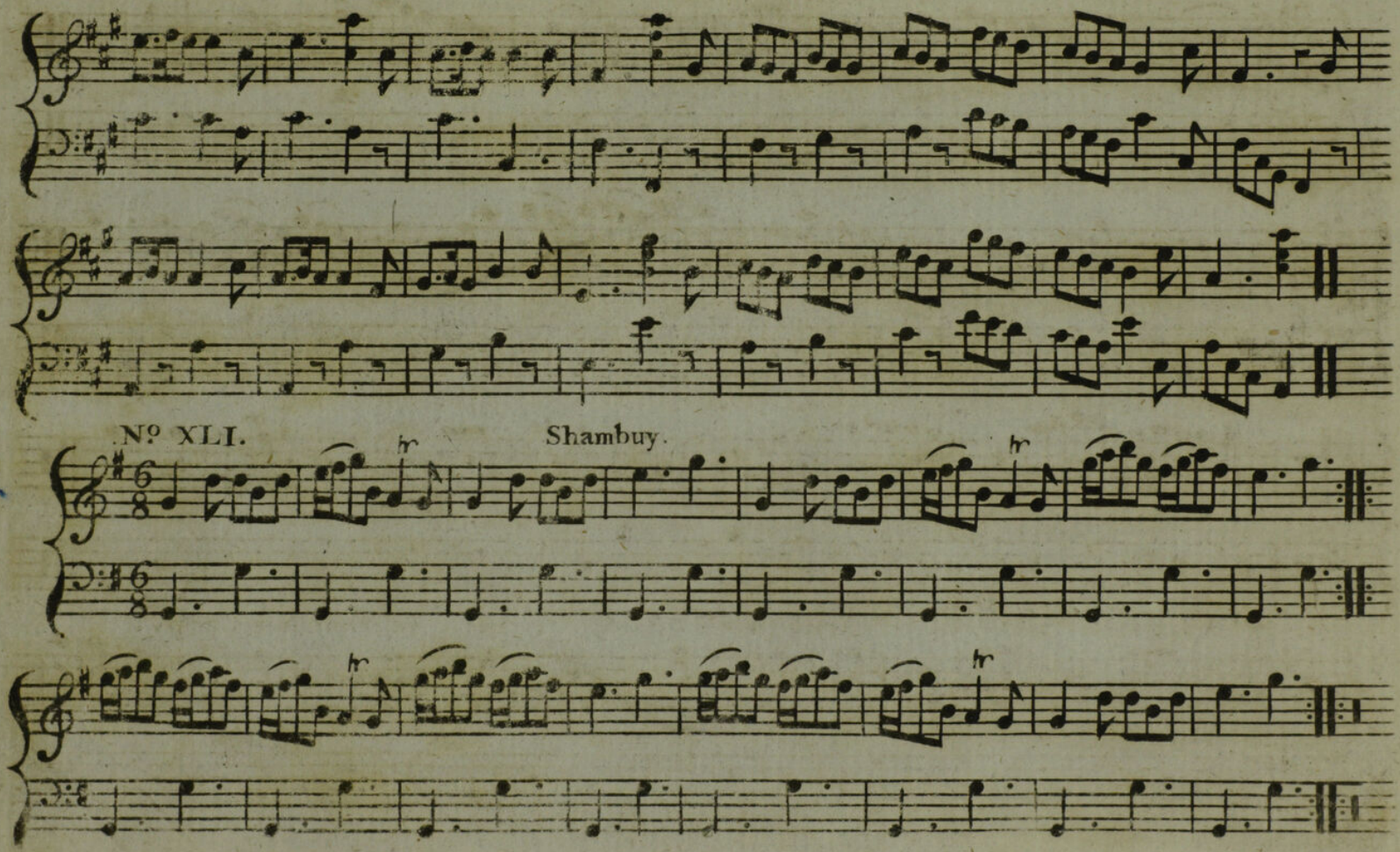
Briſk

No XXXVIII. Iriſh Air. In Robin Hood.

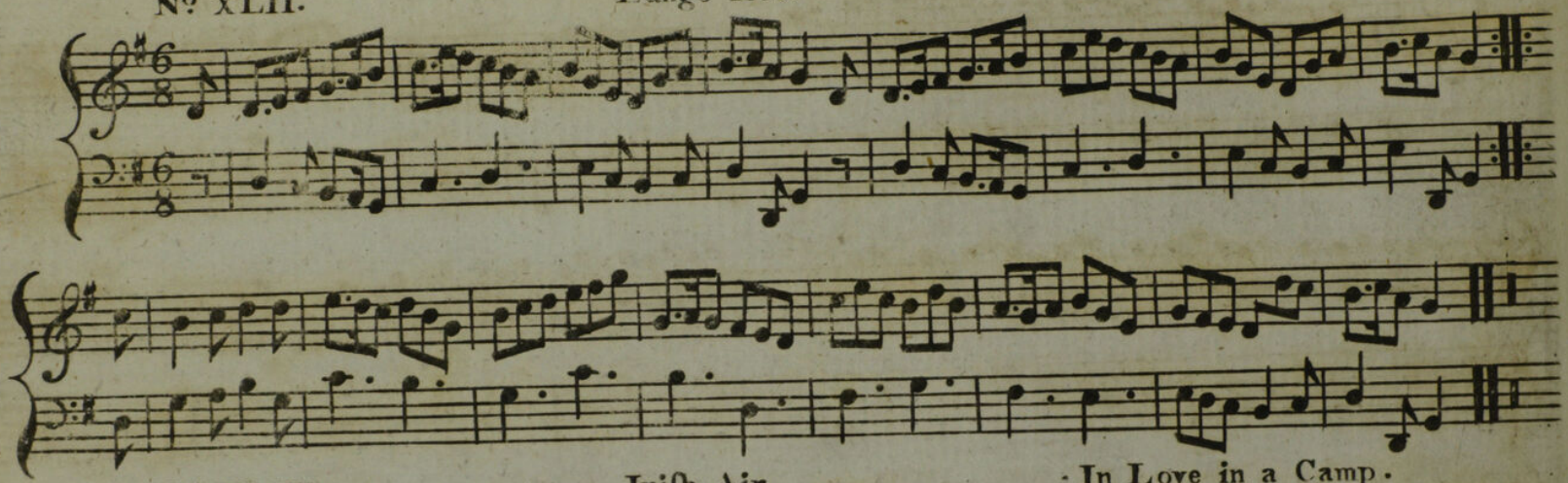
P.

F.

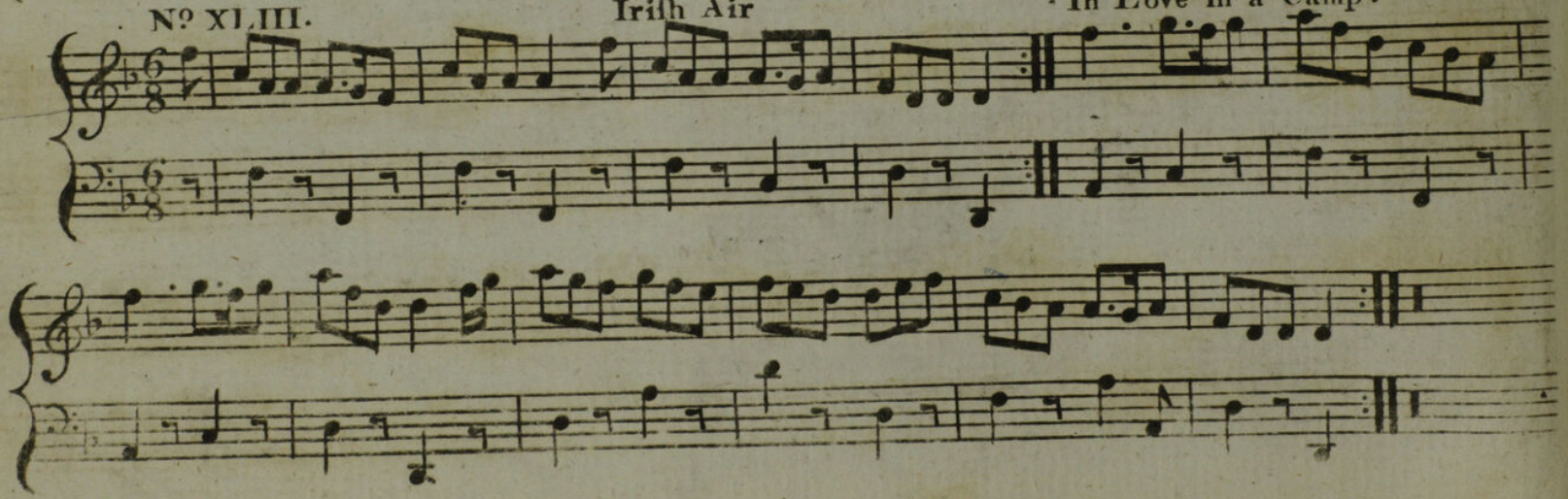

Nº XXXIX.
O Connor.
Carolan.
Nº XL.
Irish Air
In Love in a Camp.


Nº XLI.
Shambuy.

Nº XLII. Lango Lee.



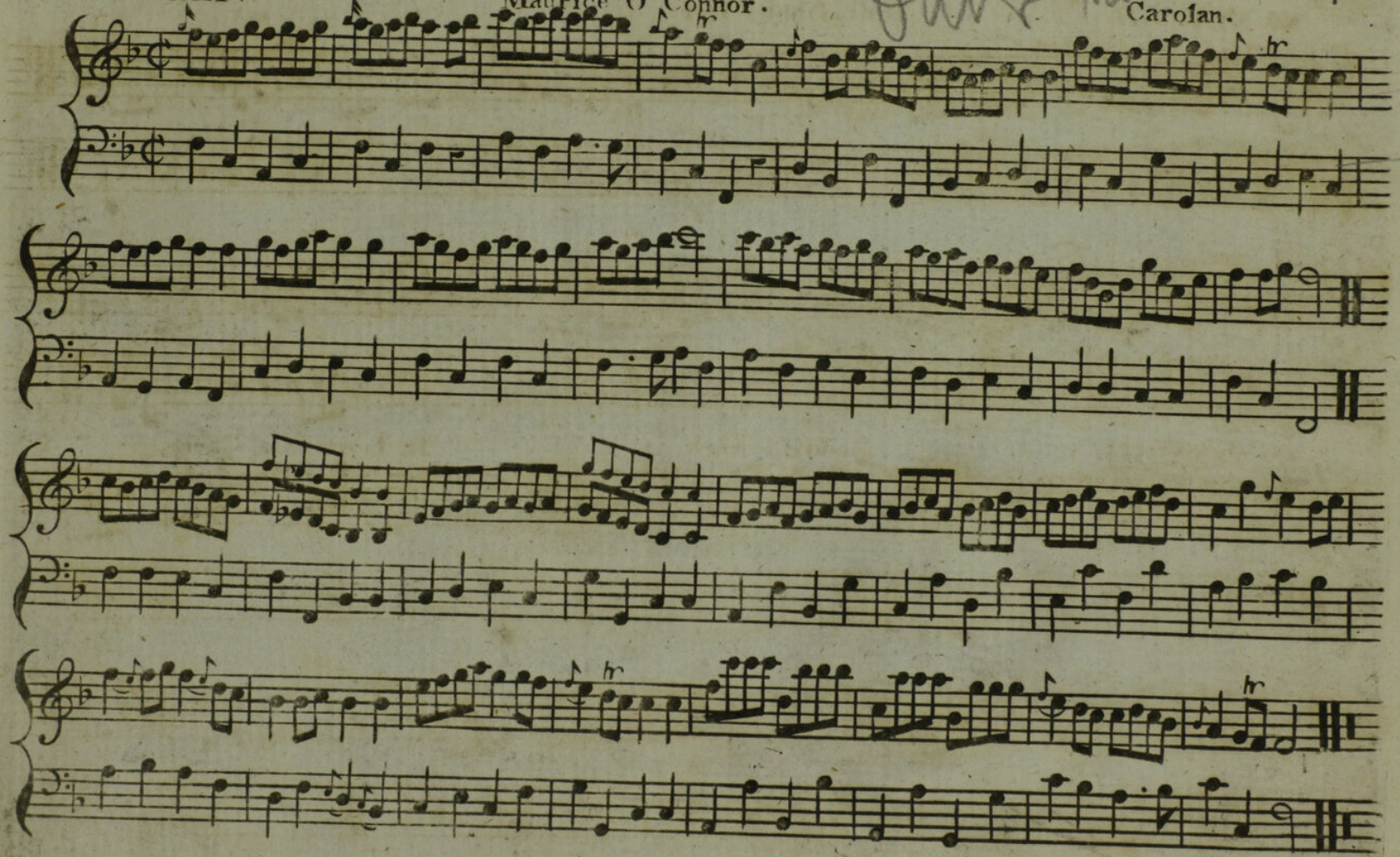
Nº XLIII. Irish Air. In Love in a Camp.



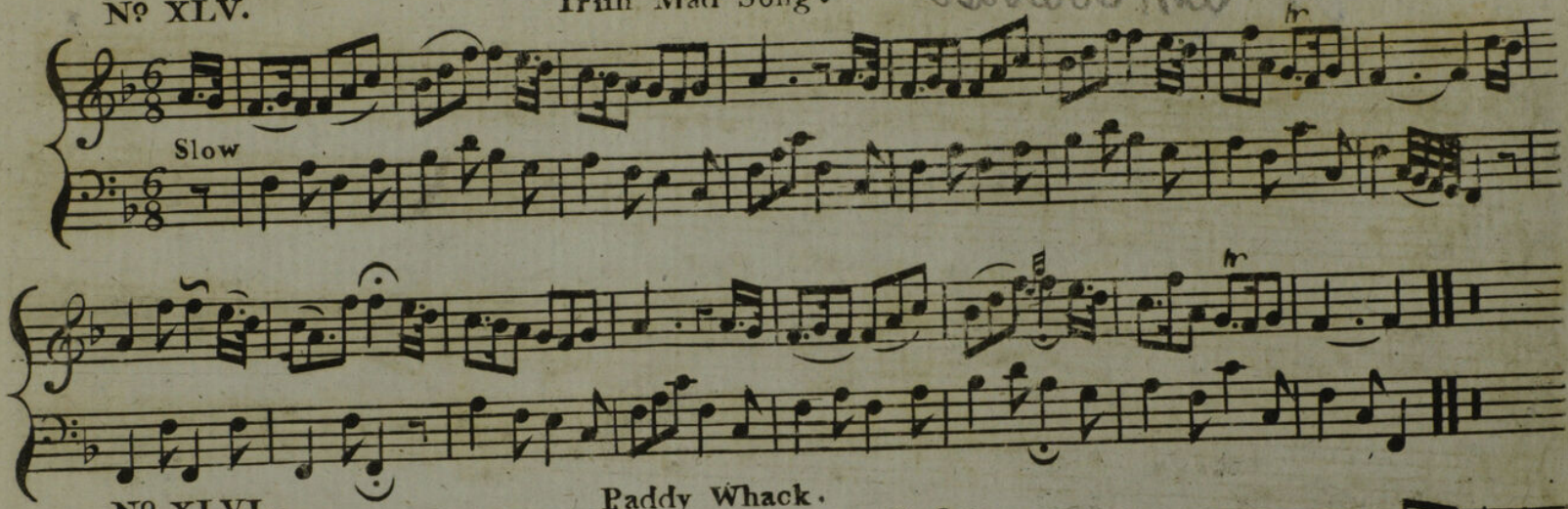
Nº XLIV.

Maurice O Connor.

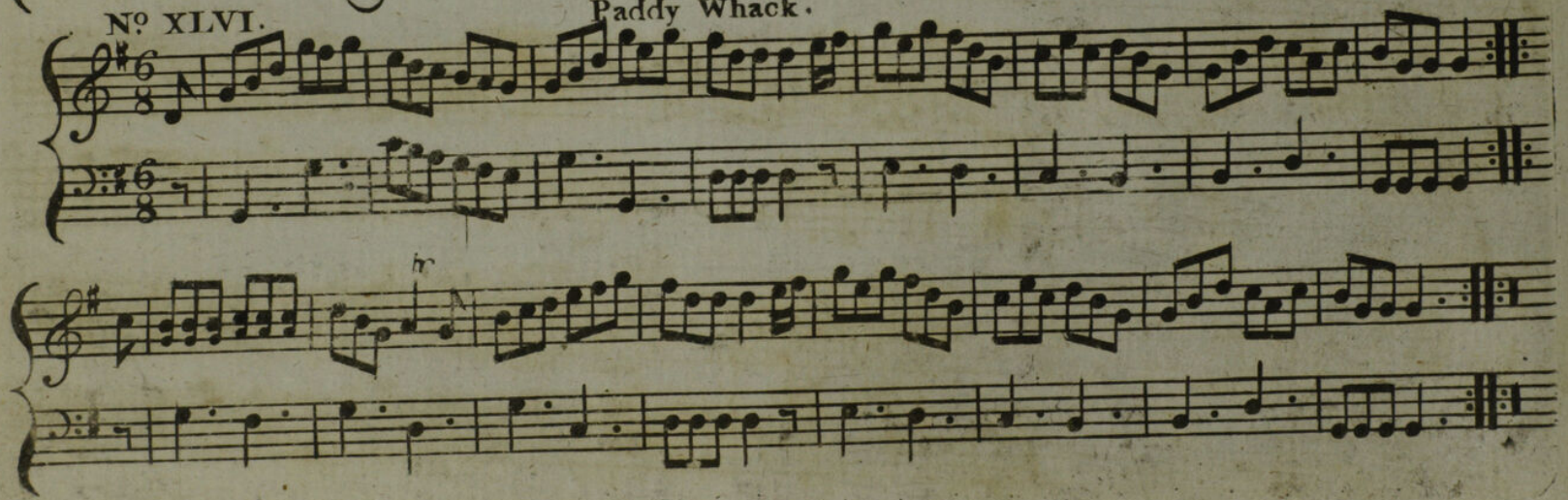
Carolan.



Nº XLV. Irish Mad Song.

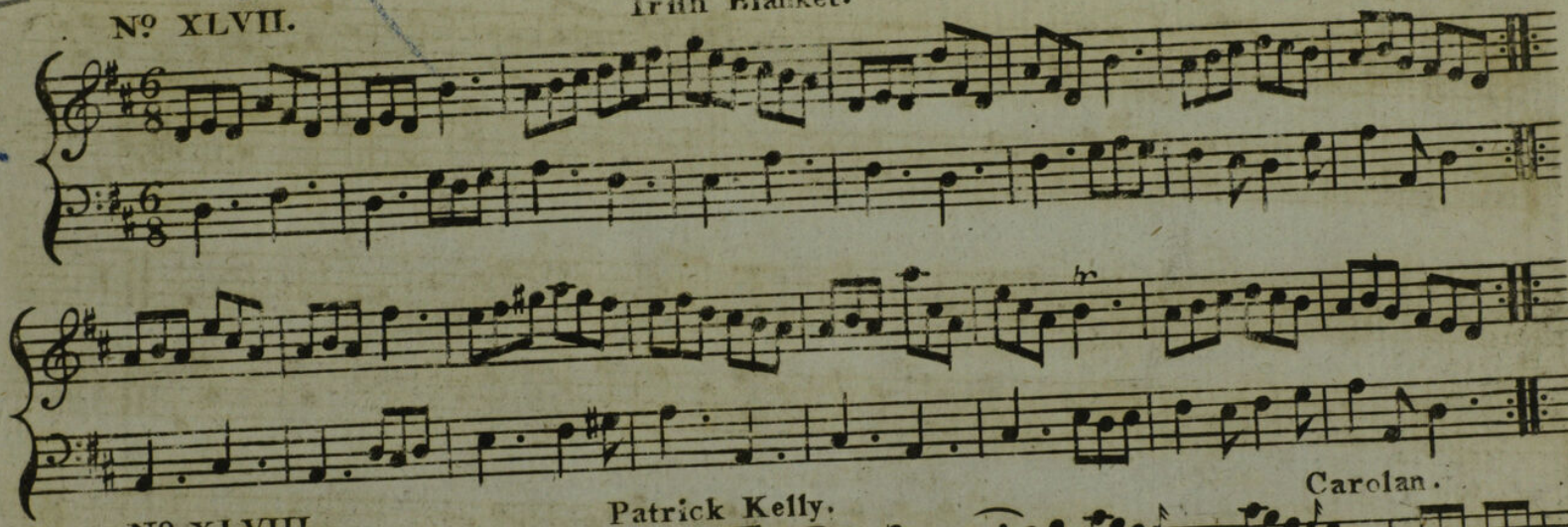


Nº XLVI. Paddy Whack.



Nº XLVII.

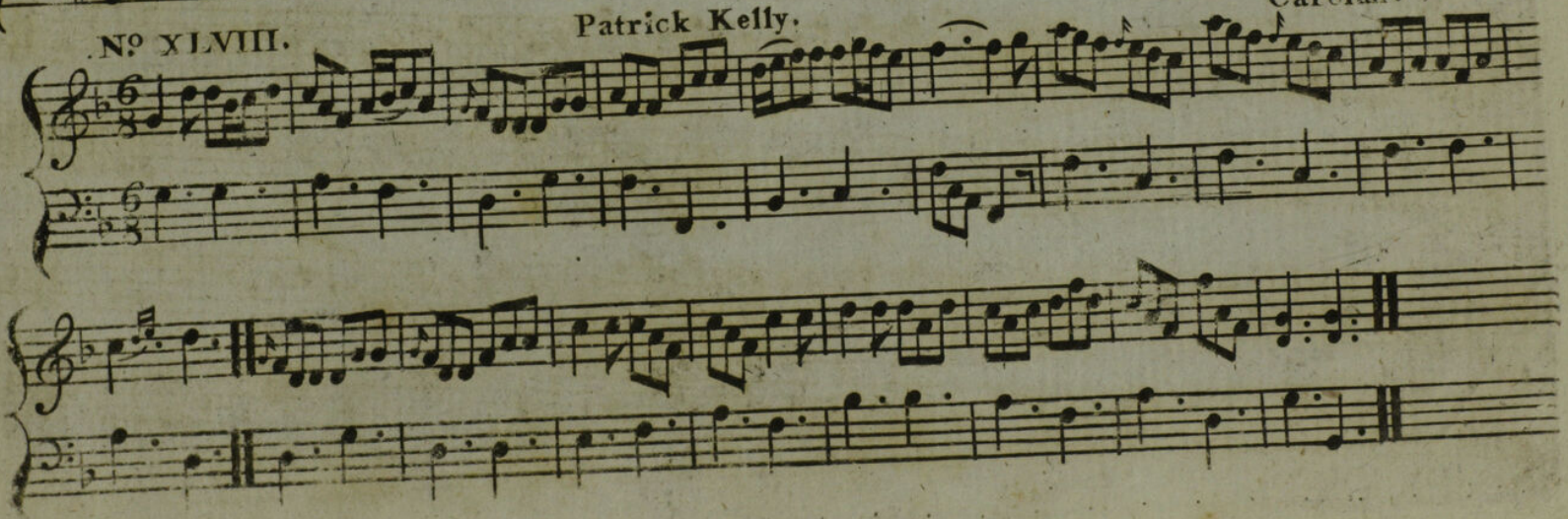
Irish Blanket.



Nº XLVIII.

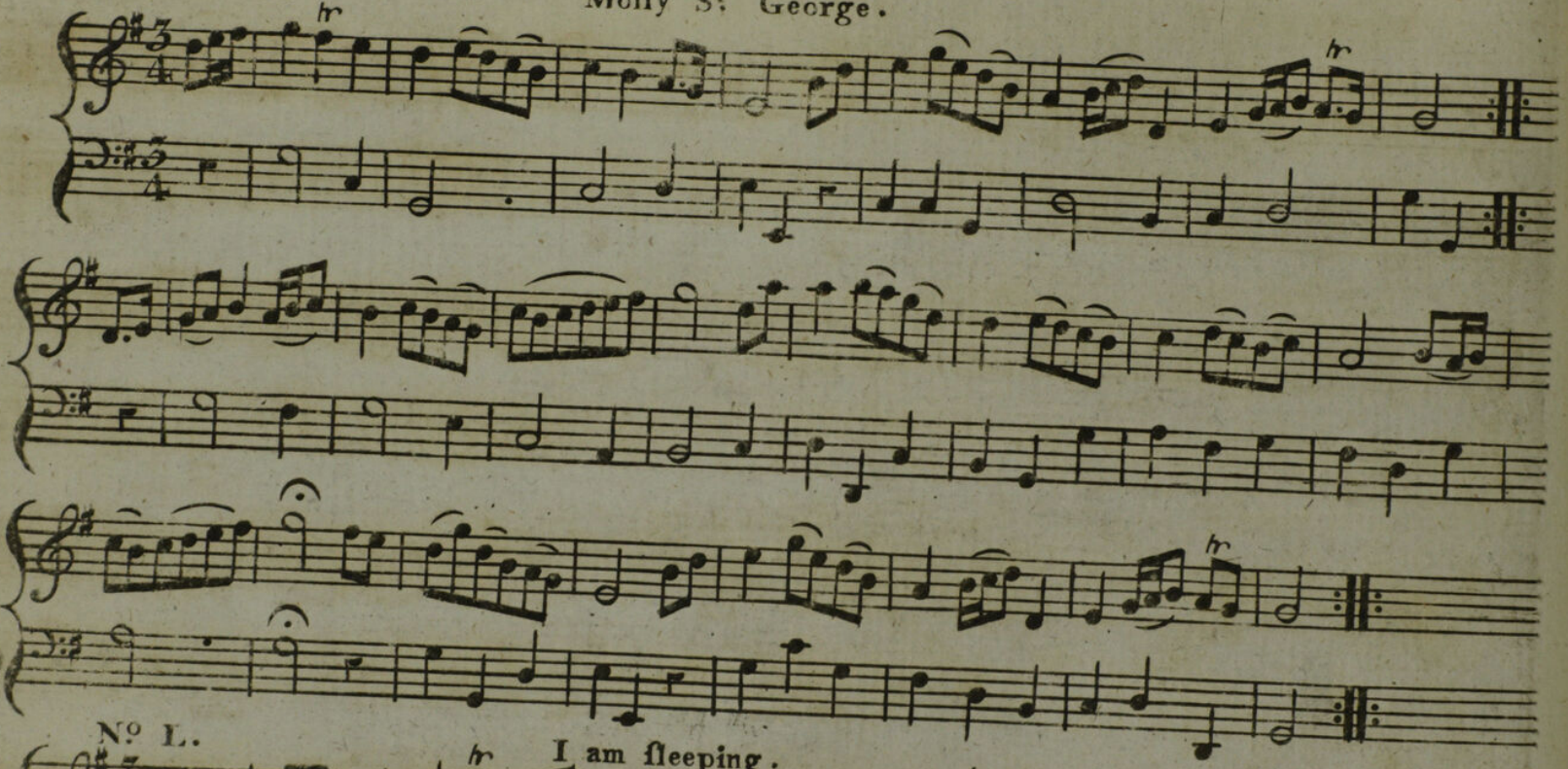
Patrick Kelly.

Carolan.



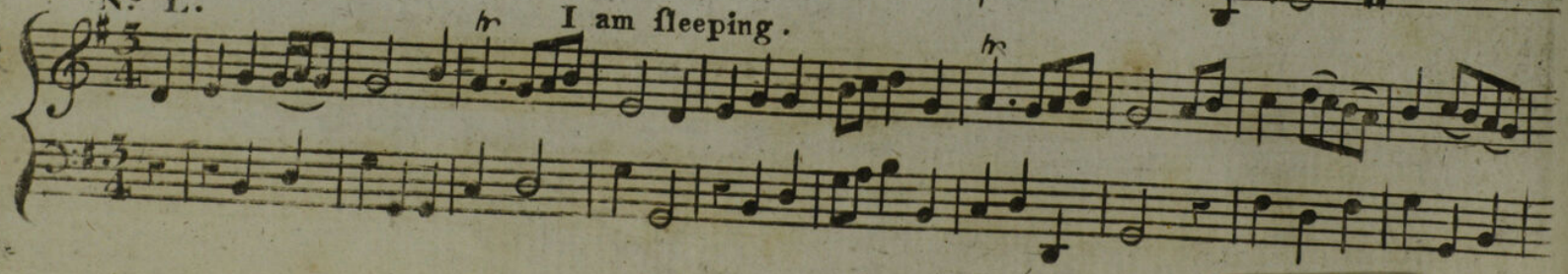
No XLIX.

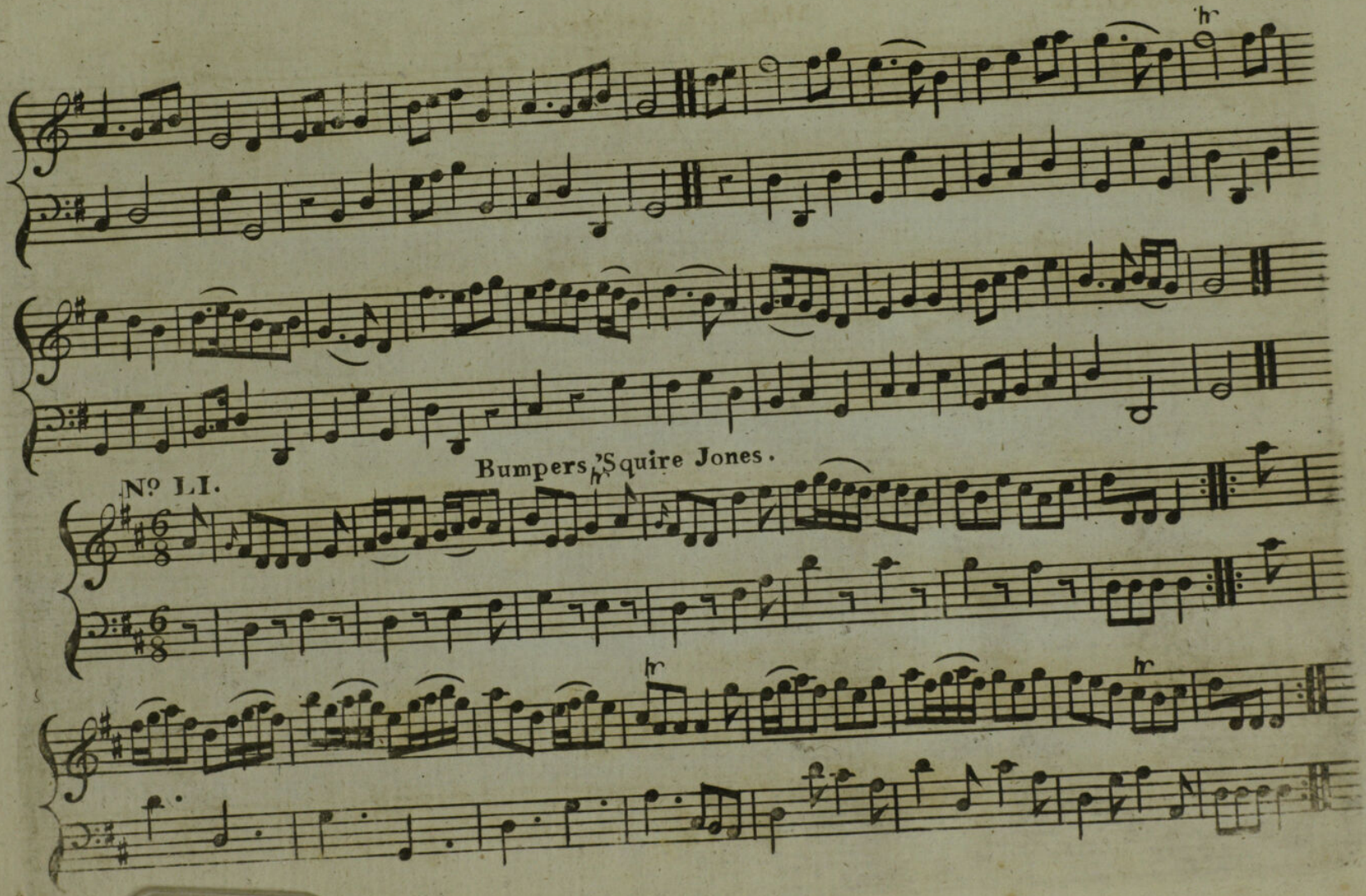
Molly St George.



No L.

I am sleeping.

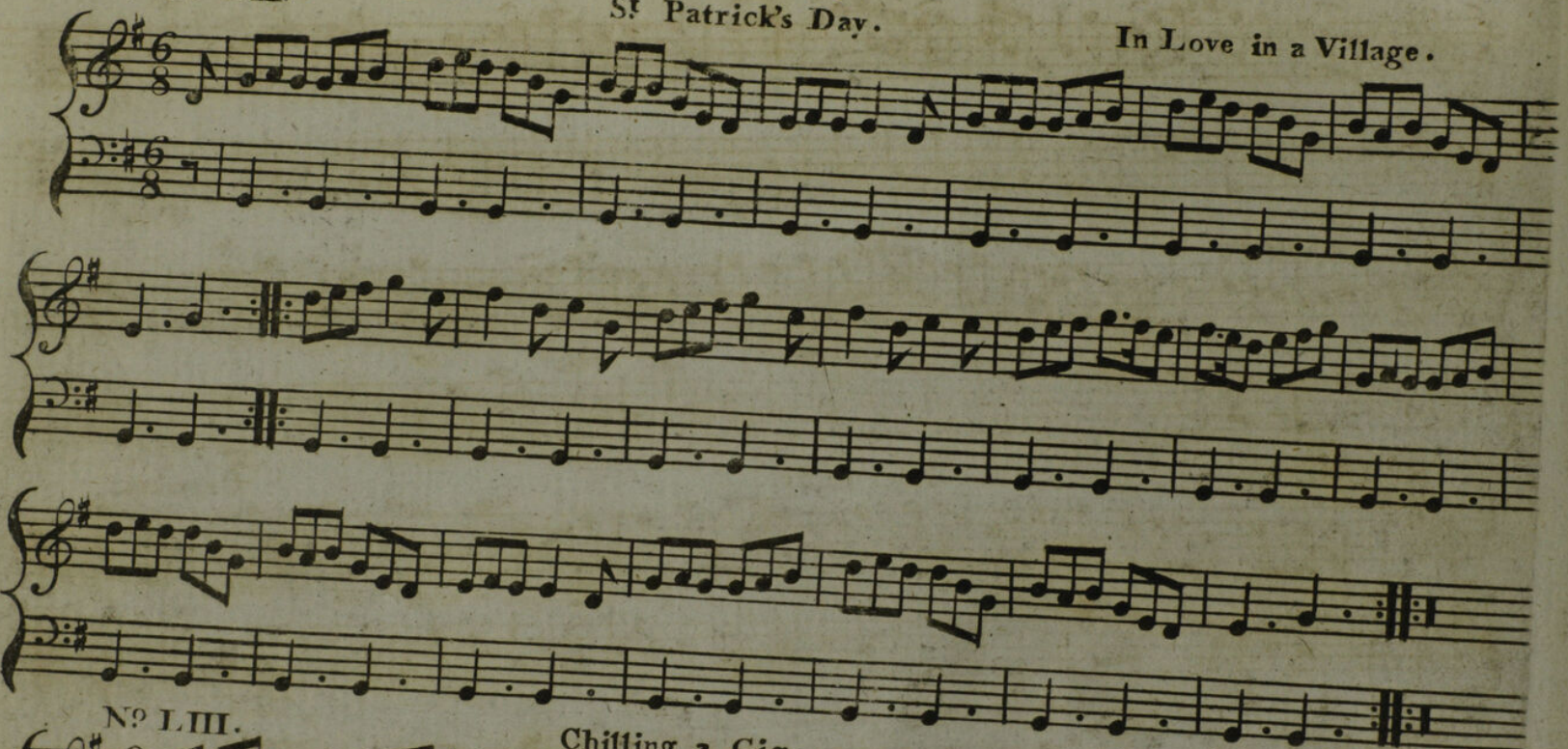



Nº LI.
Bumpers, 'Squire Jones.

Nº LII.

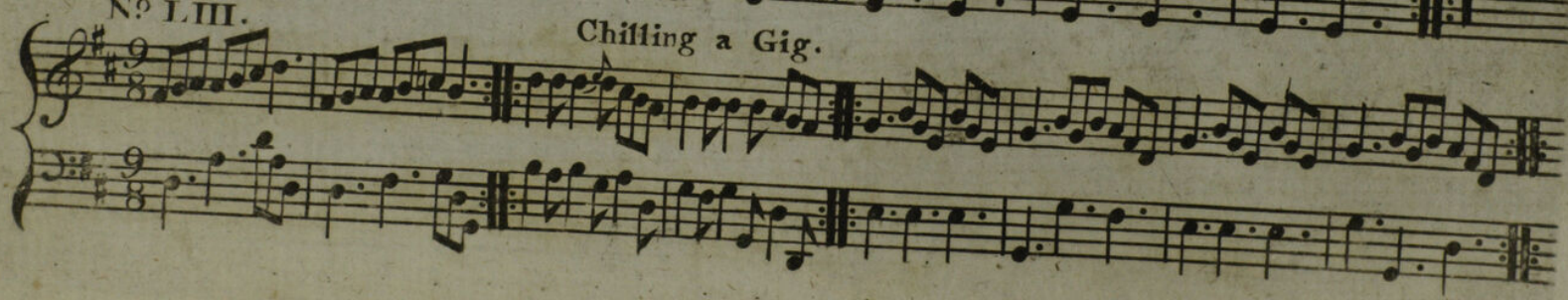
St Patrick's Day.

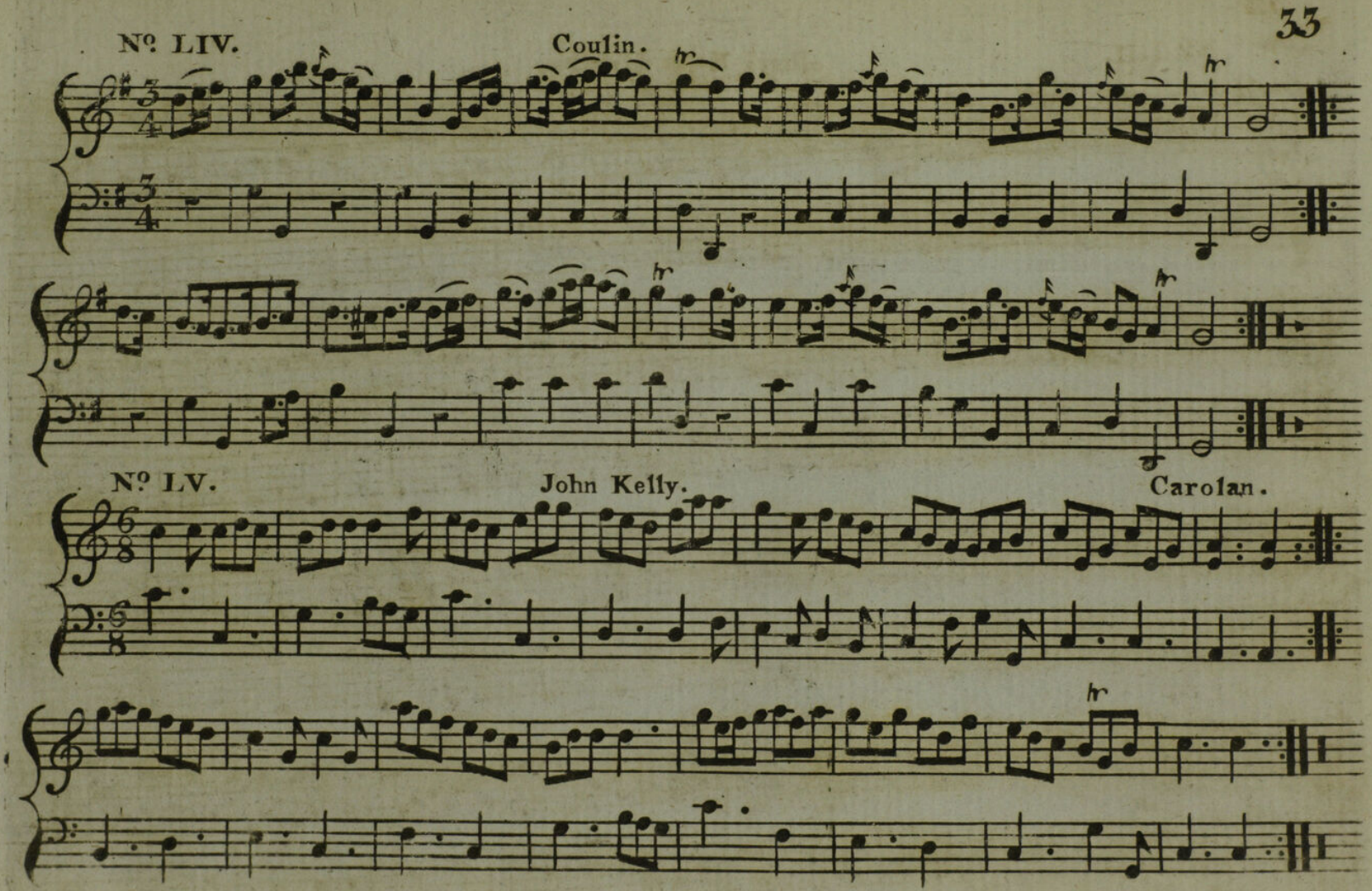
In Love in a Village.



Nº LIII.

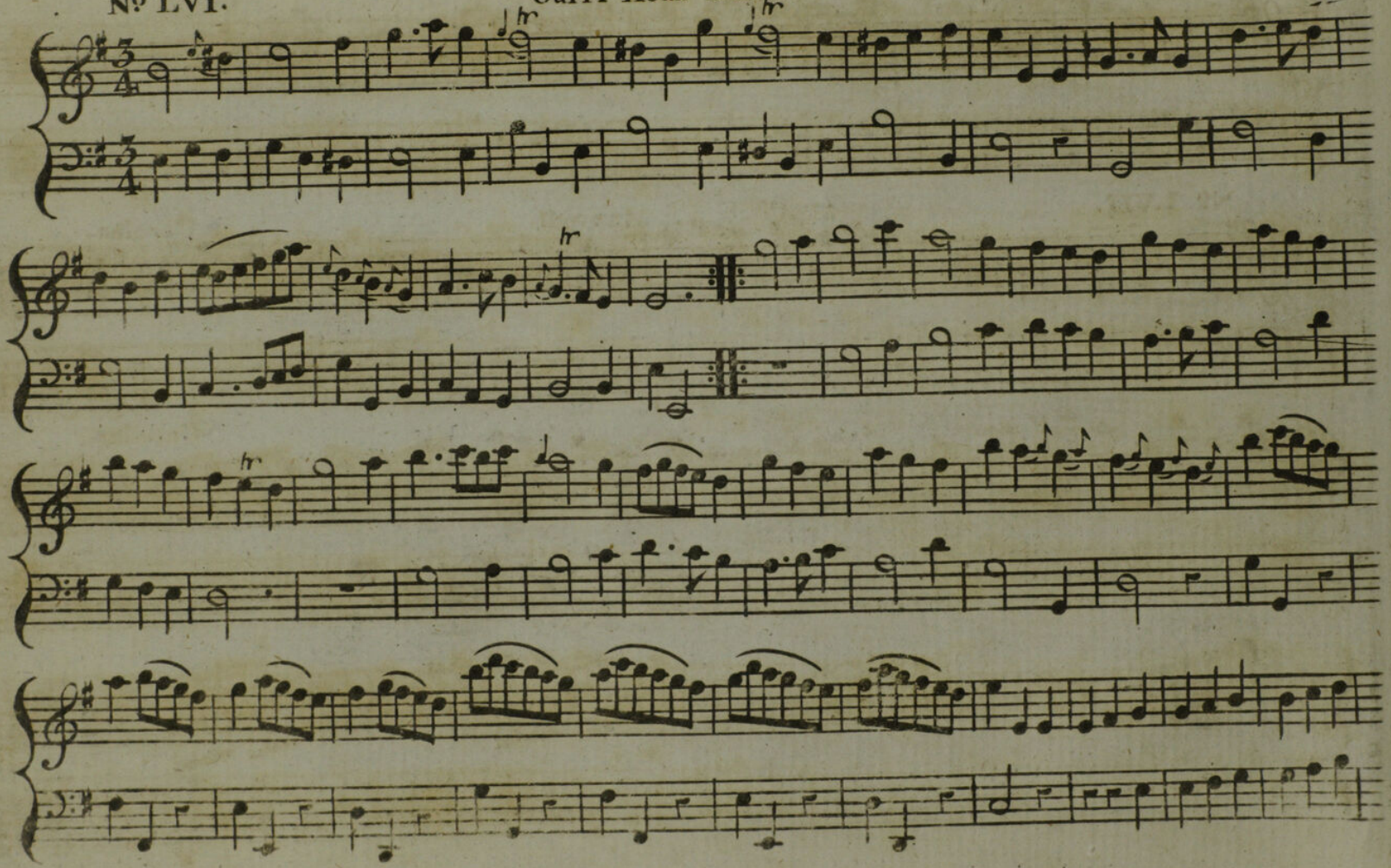
Chilling a Gig.

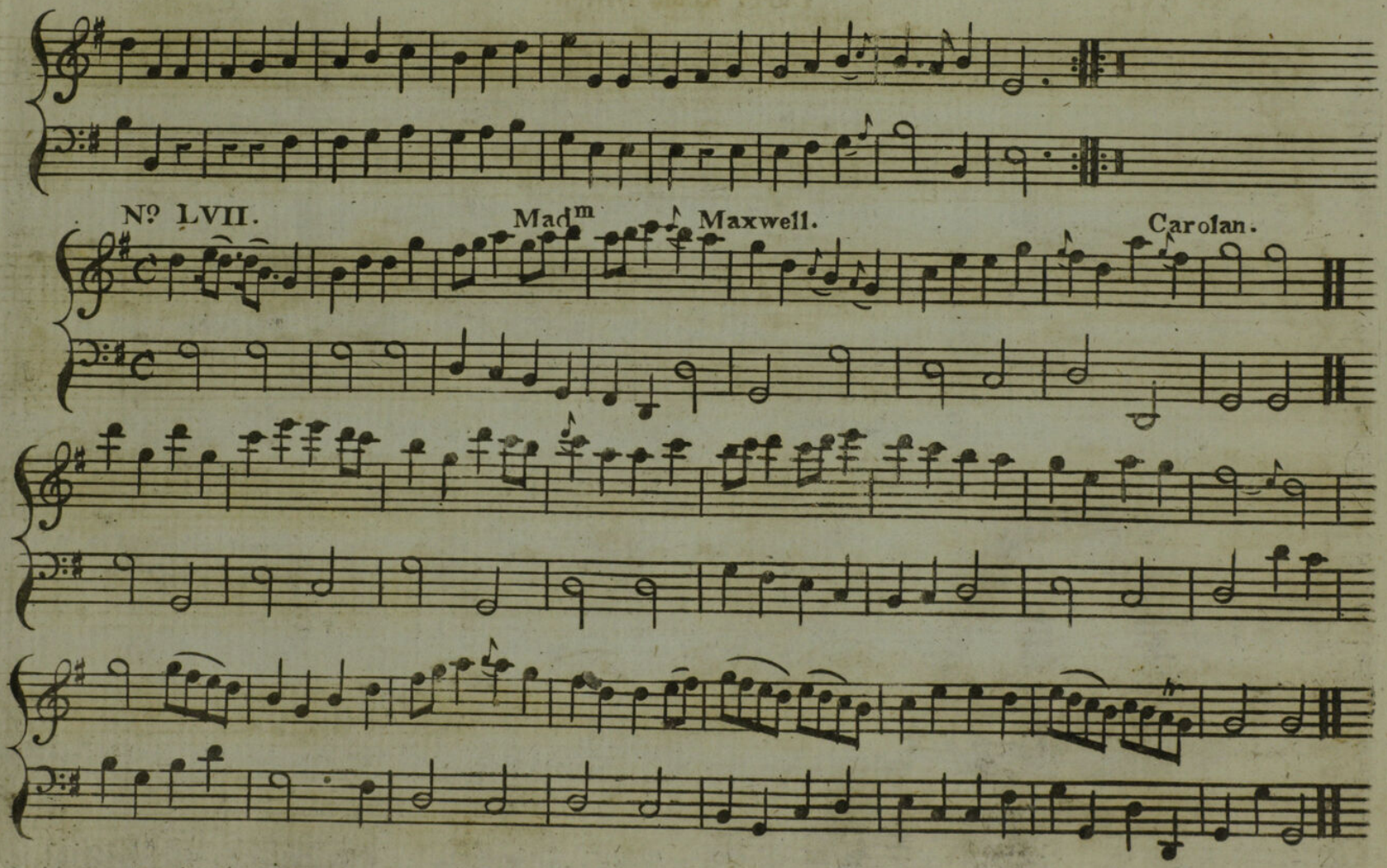



Nº LIV.
Coulin.
Nº LV.
John Kelly.
Carolan.

Nº LVI.

Curri Koun Dilich.

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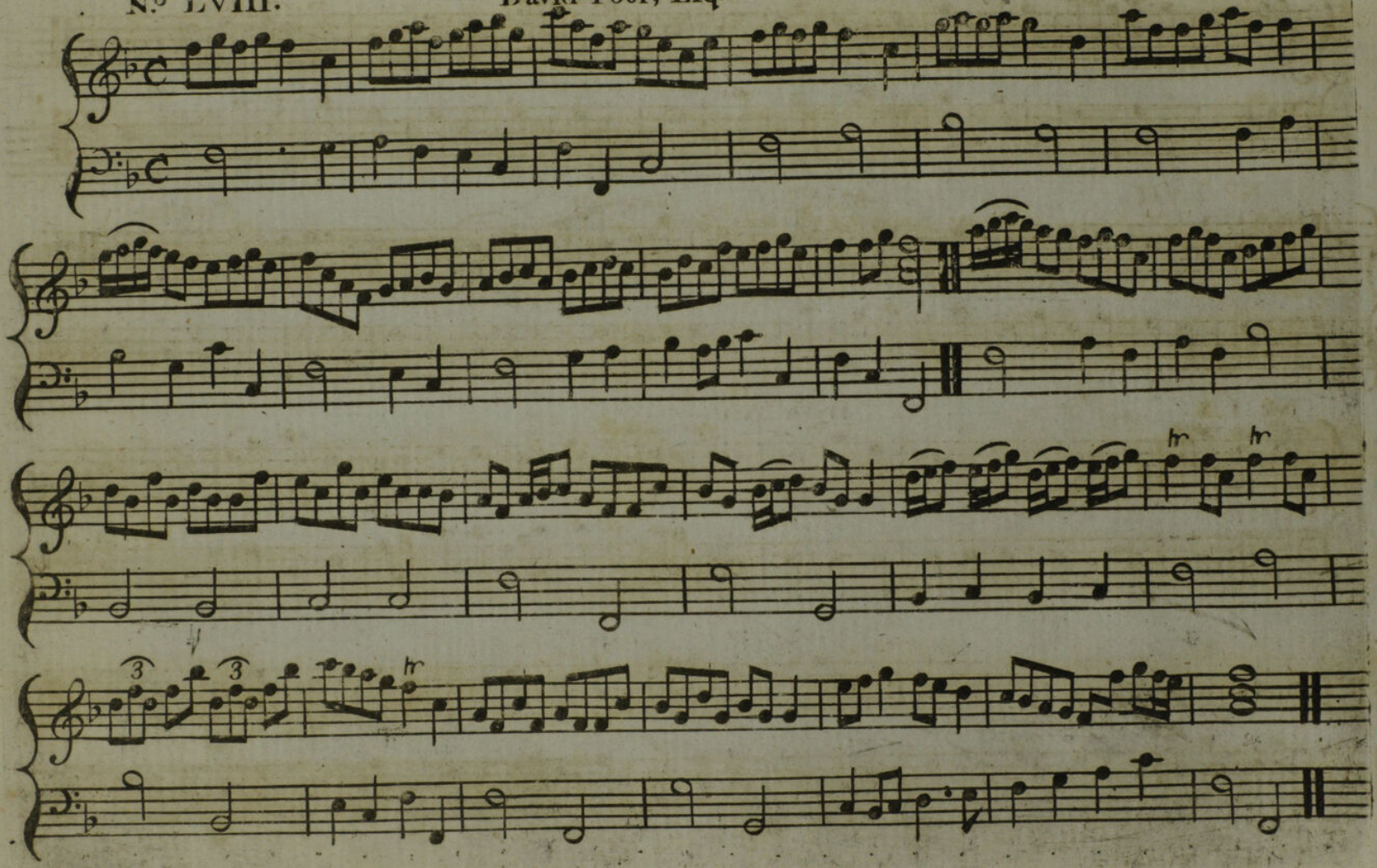
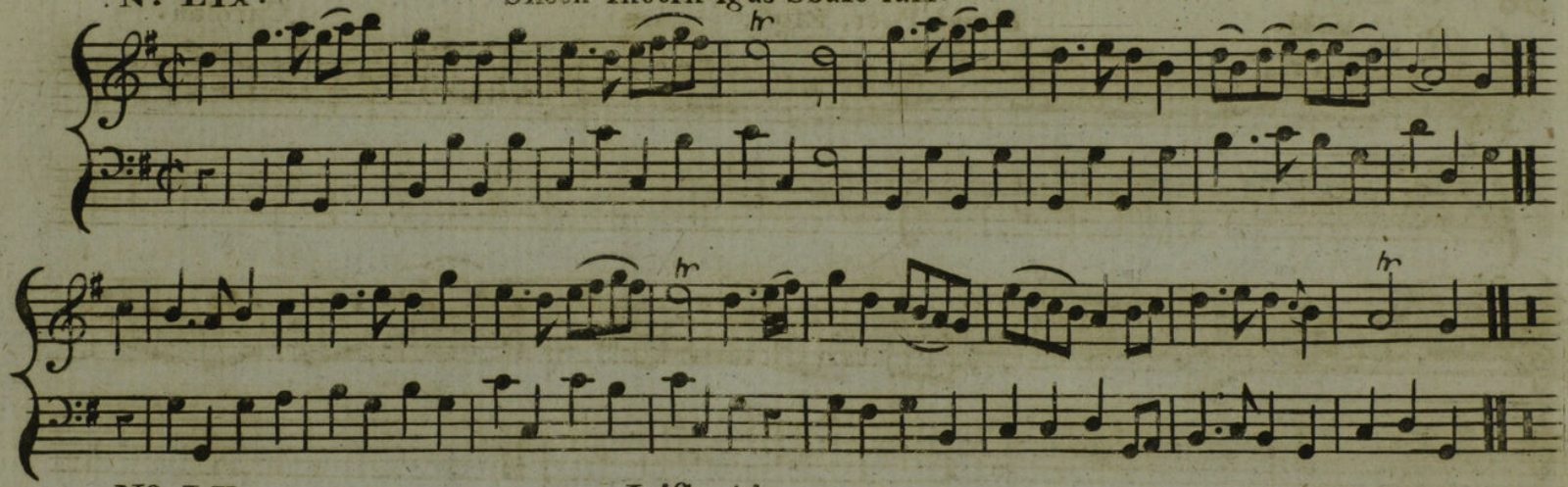
Madm Maxwell.
Carolan.

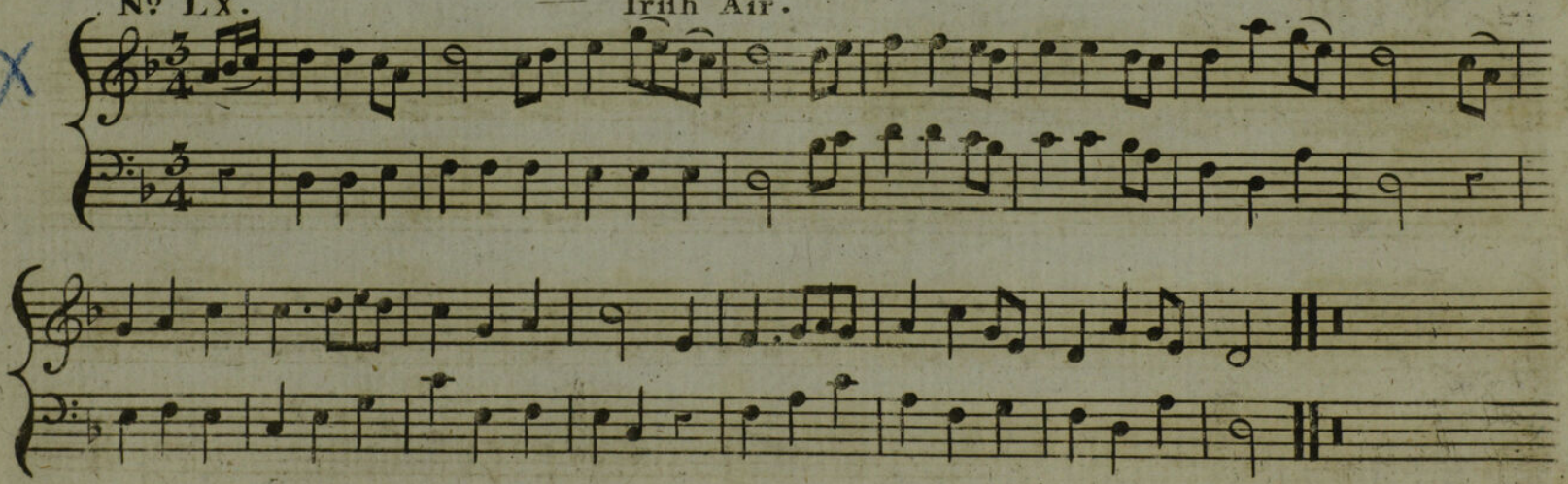
N.º LVIII. David Poer, Esq.r Carolan.



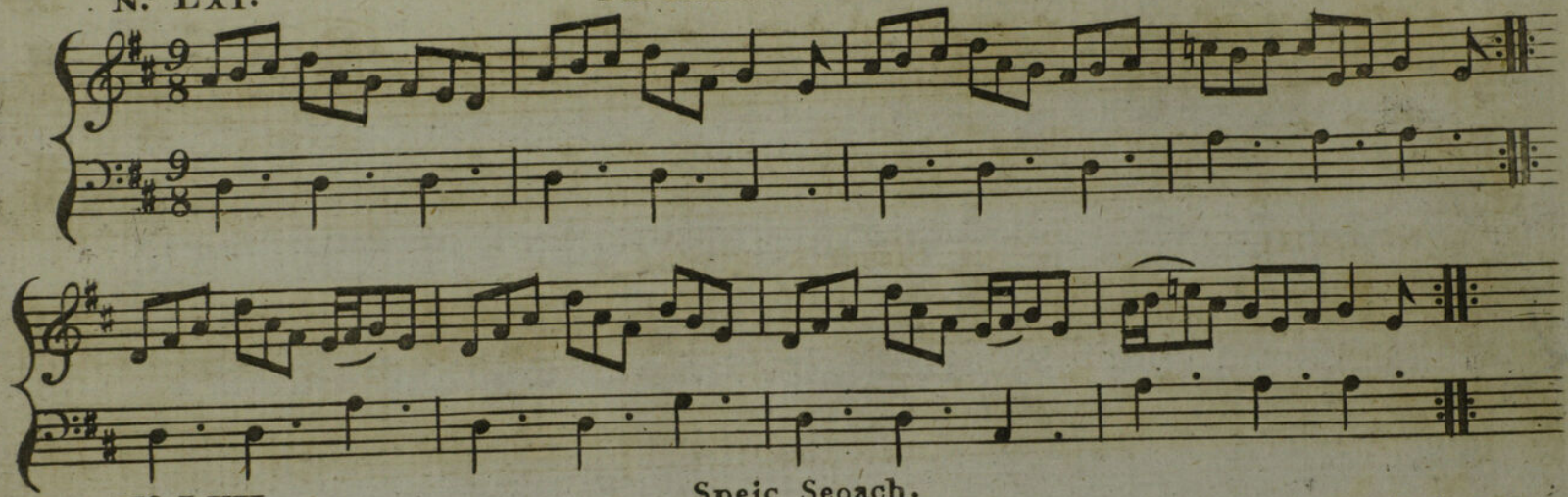
Nº LIX. Sheen sheesh igus Souse lum.



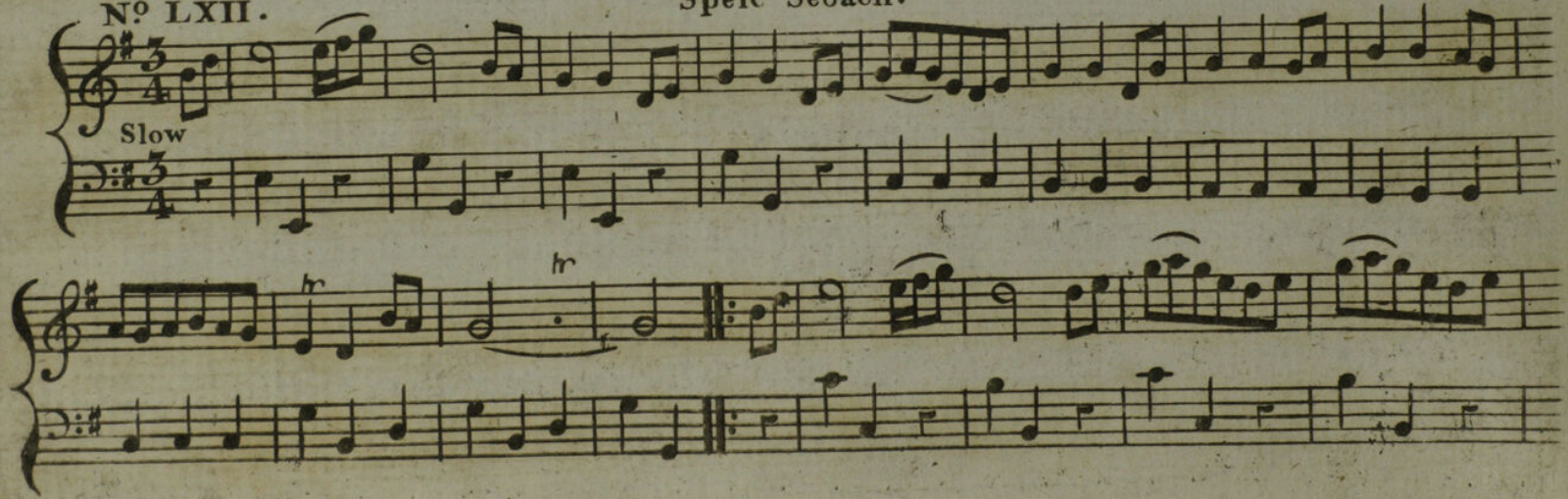
Nº LX. — Irish Air.

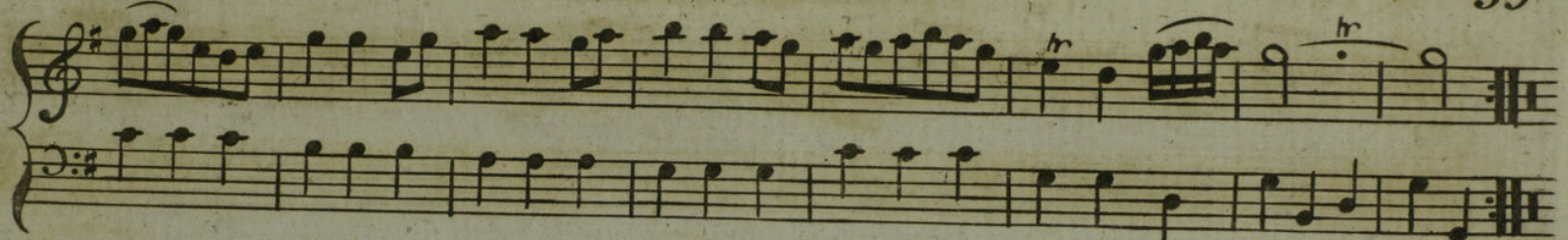


Nº LXI. The Rakes of Weſtmeath.



Nº LXII. Speic Seoach.

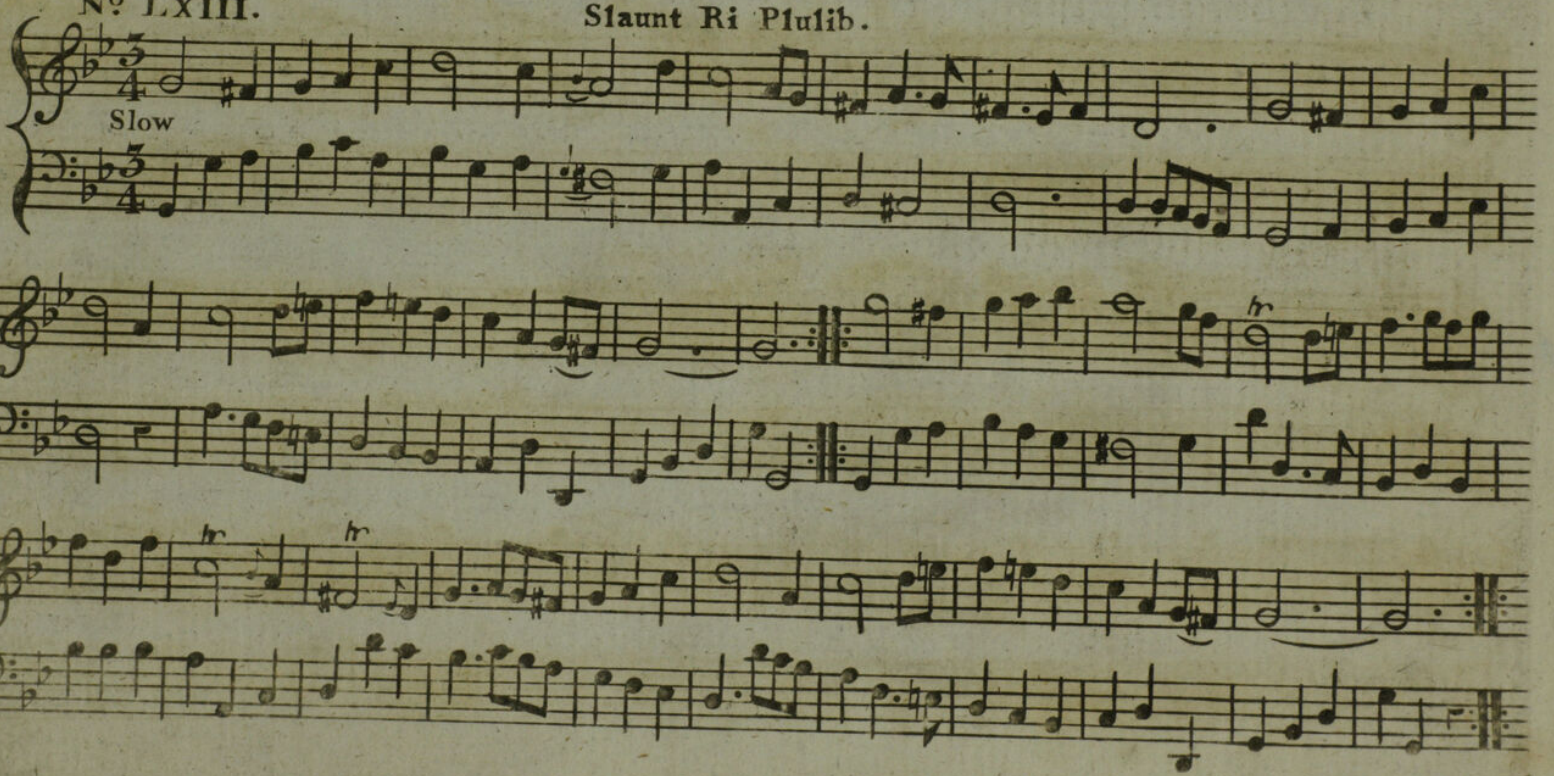




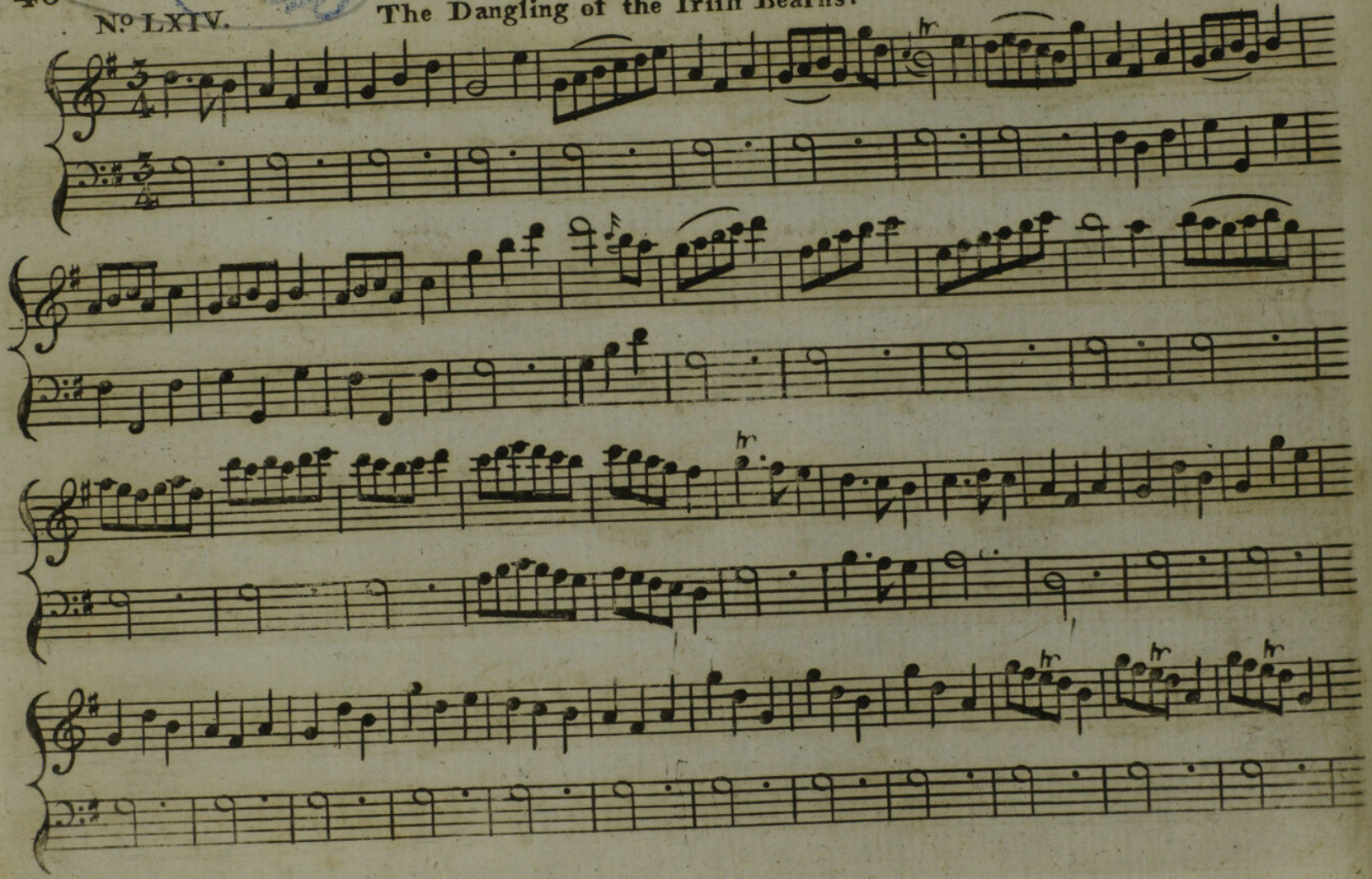
Nº LXIII.

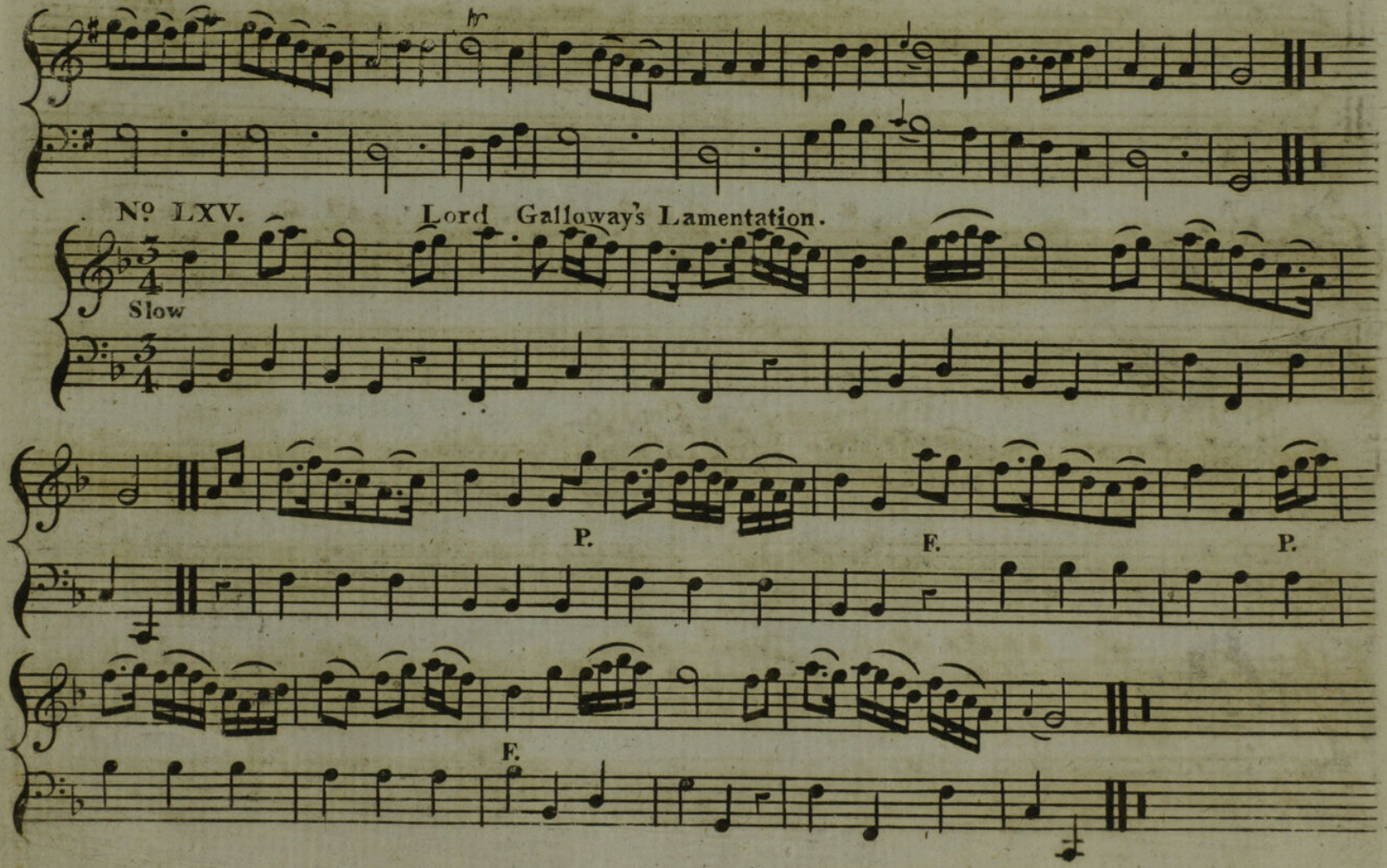
Slaunt Ri Plulib.

Slow

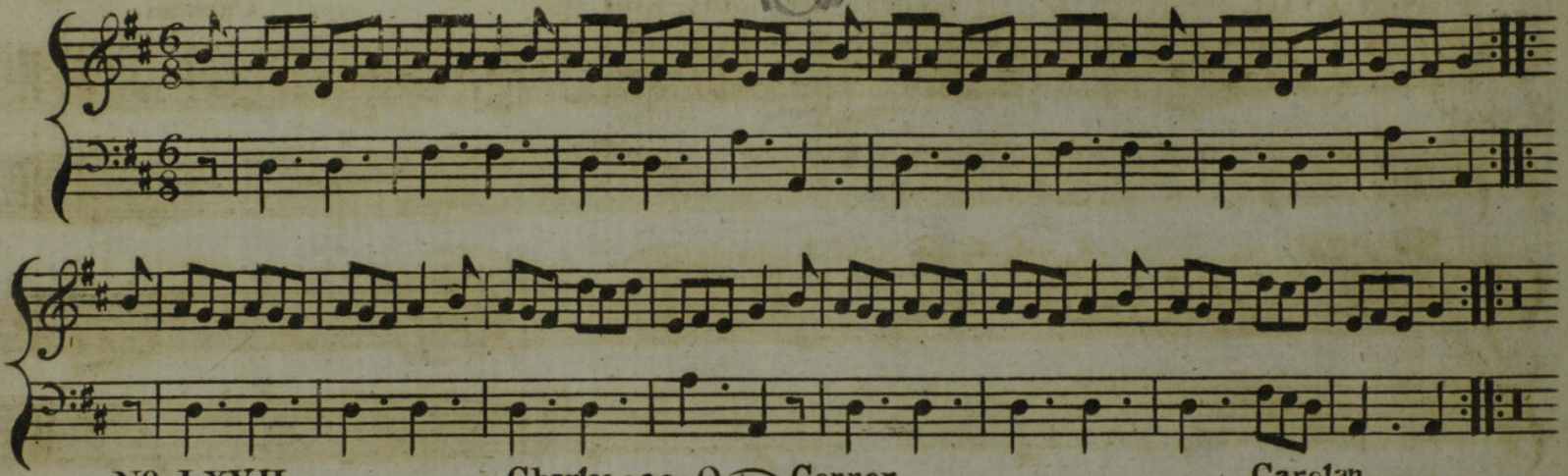


No. LXIV. The Dangling of the Iriſh Bearns.

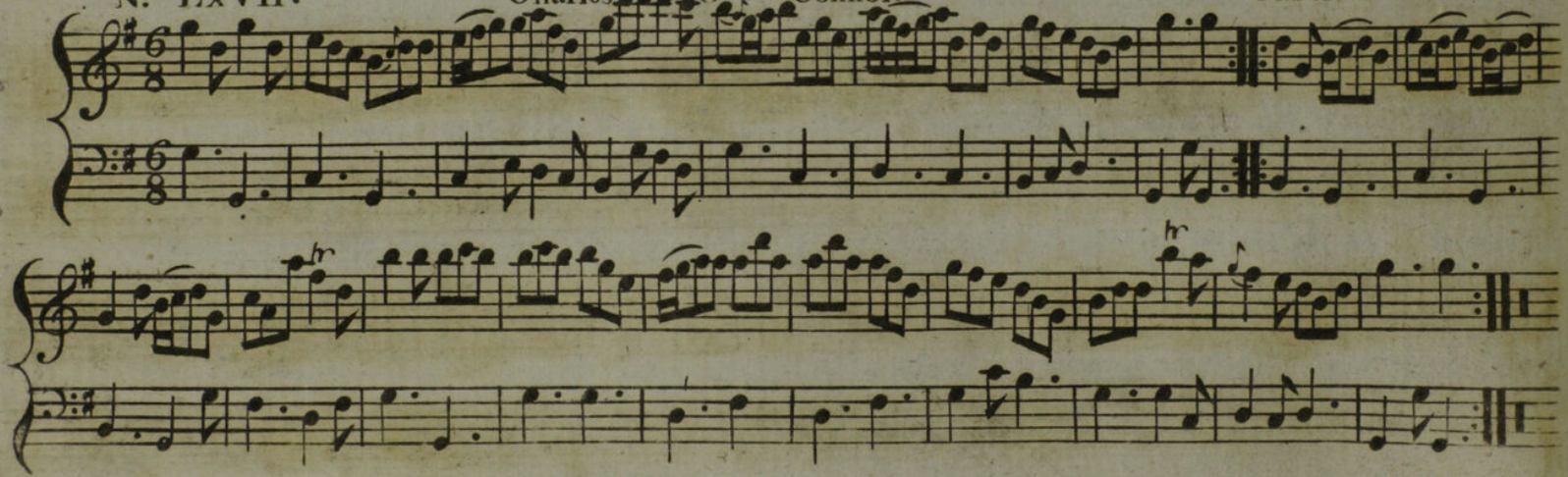



Nº LXV.
Lord Galloway's Lamentation.
Slow
P.
F.
P.
F.

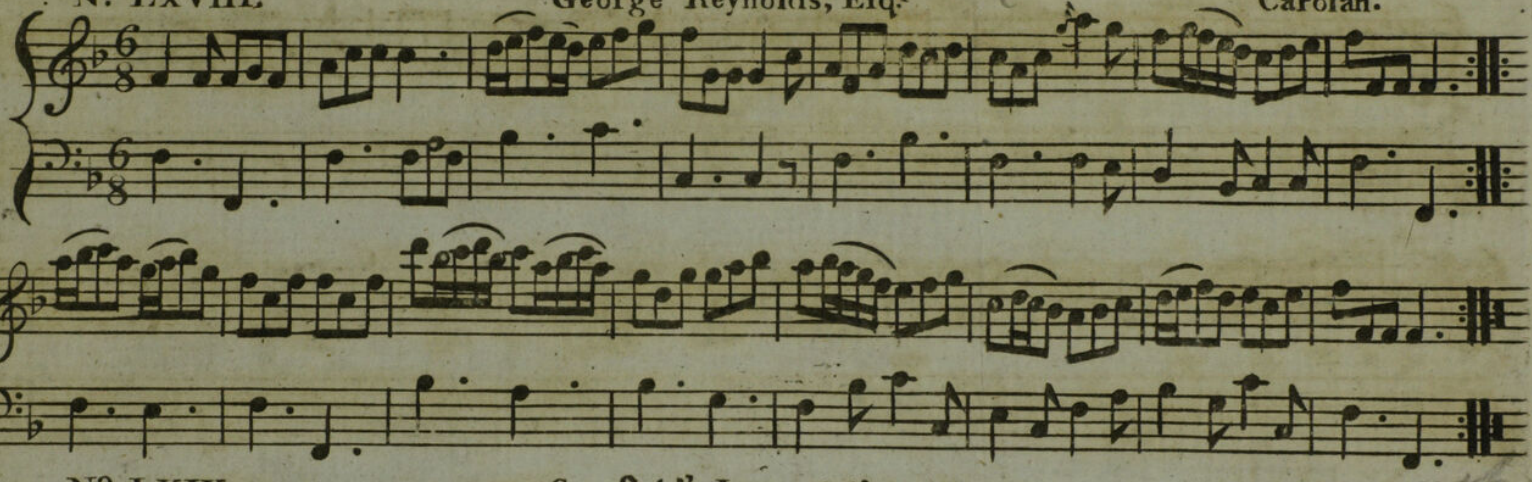
Nº LXVI. Irish Air In the Poor Soldier.



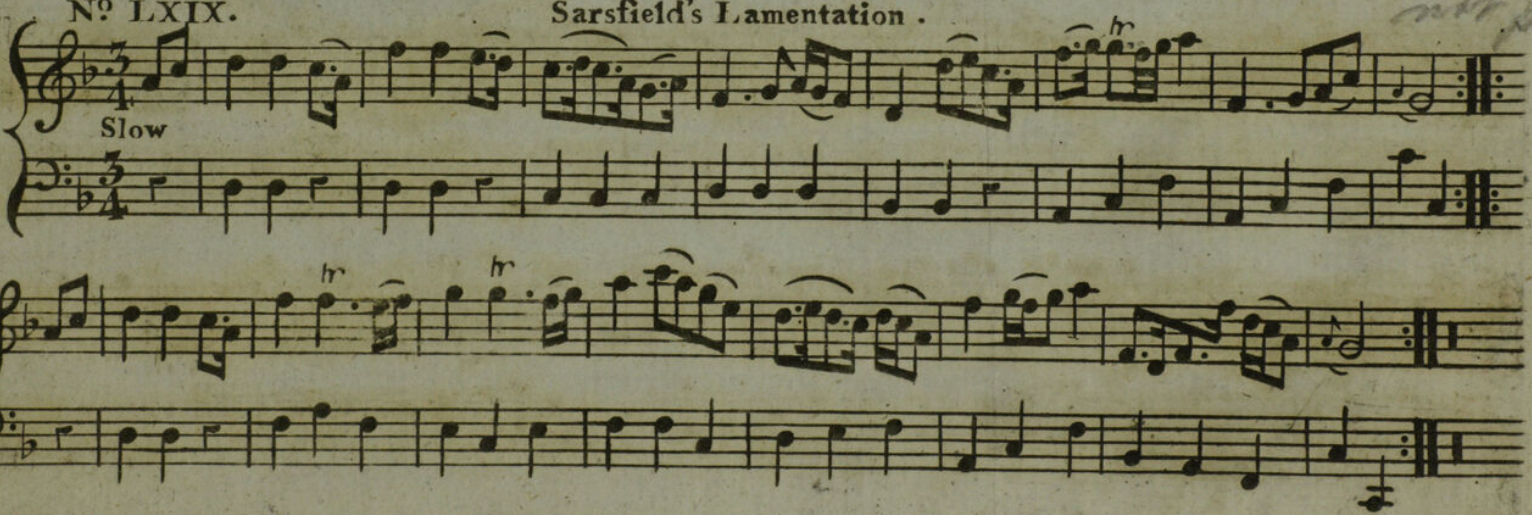
Nº LXVII. Charles O Connor. Carolan.



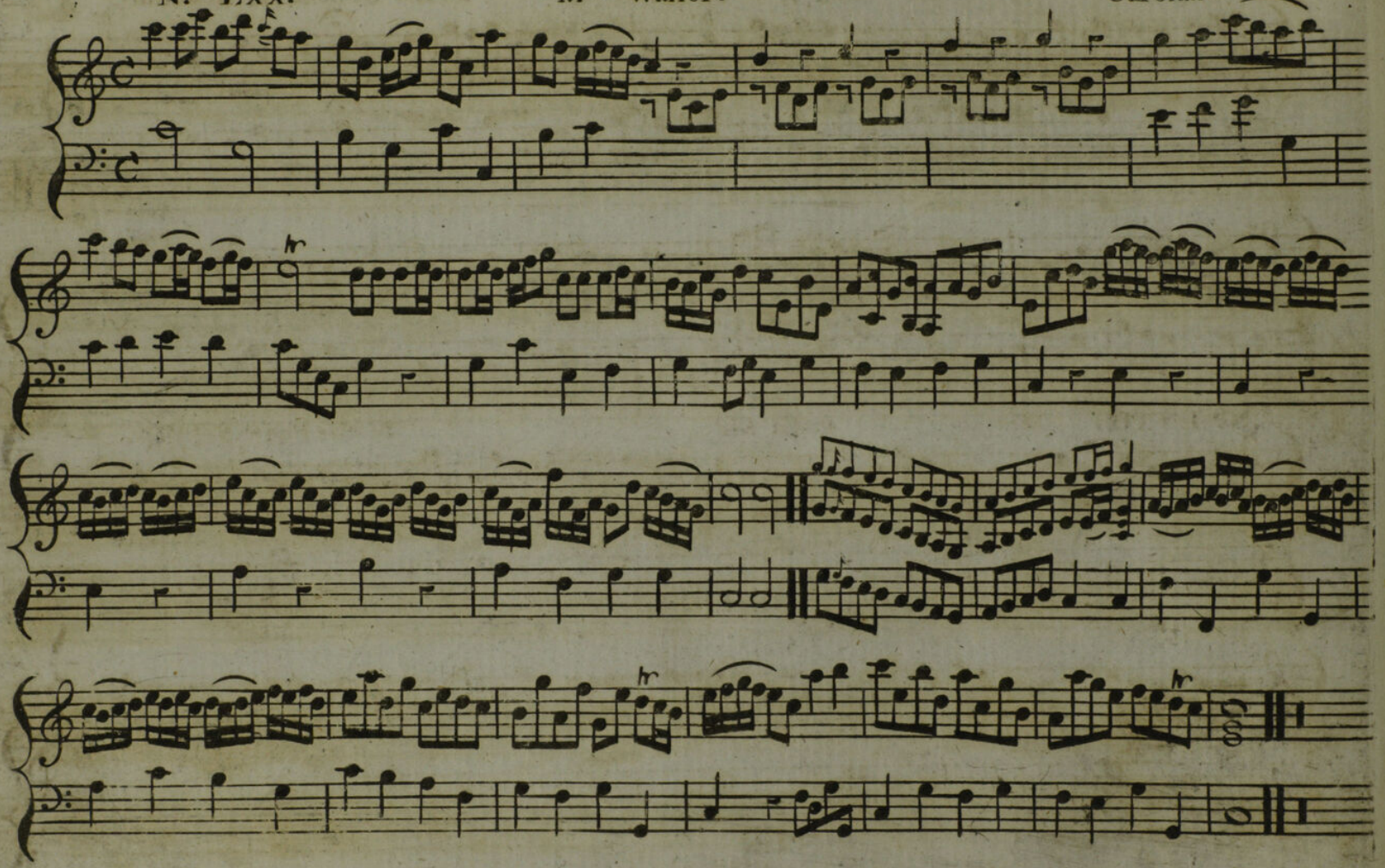
Nº LXVIII. George Reynolds, Esqr Carolan.



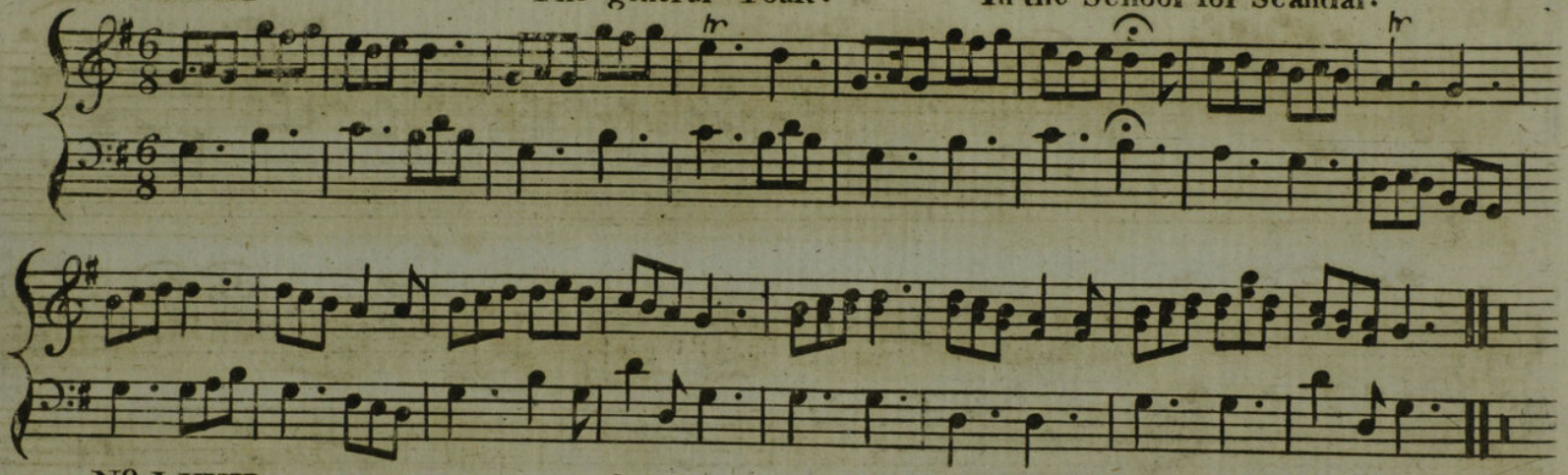
Nº LXIX. Sarsfield's Lamentation.



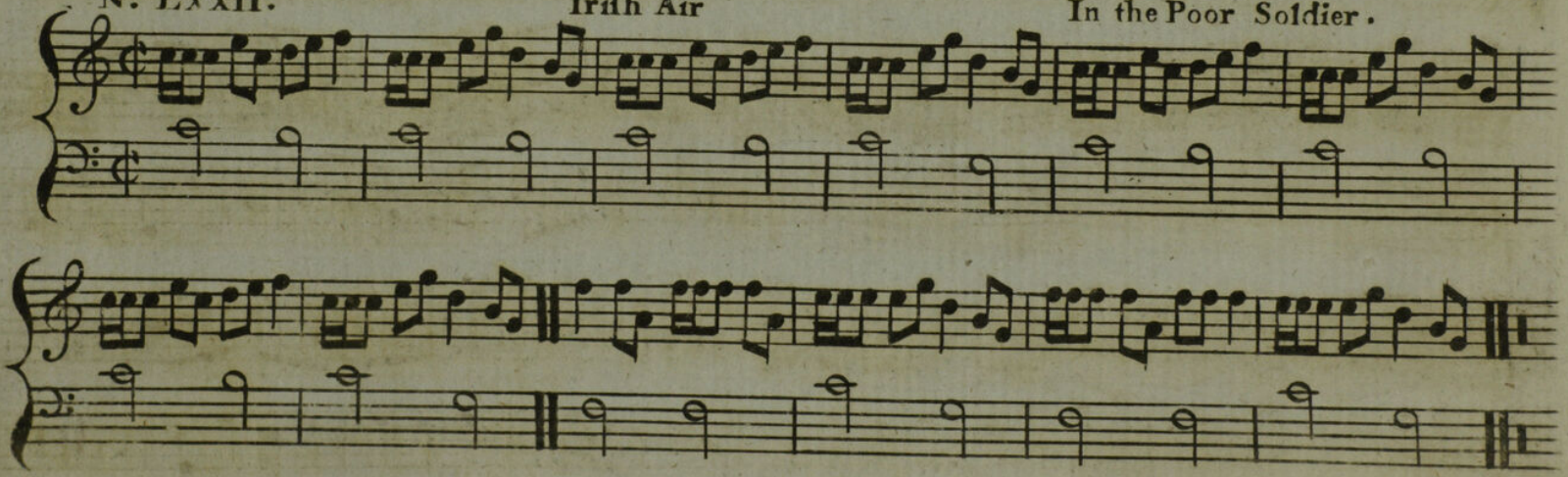
Nº LXX. Mrs Waller. Carolan.



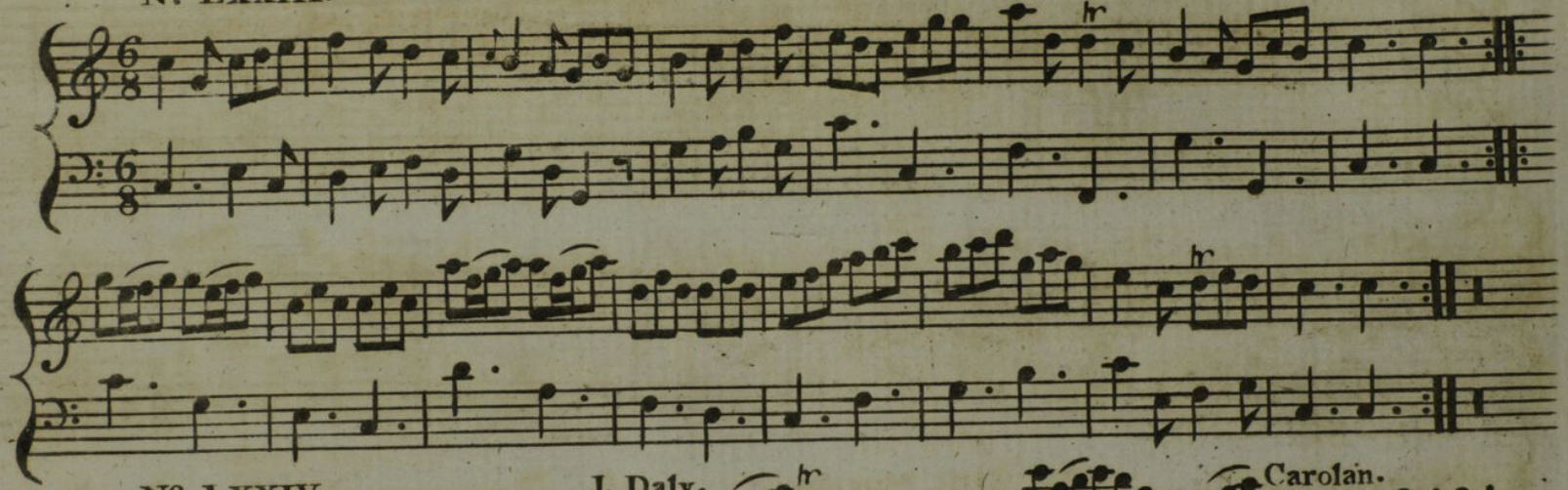
Nº LXXI. The general Toaſt. In the School for Scandal.



Nº LXXII. Iriſh Air In the Poor Soldier.



Nº LXXIII. Mrs Trench. Carolan.



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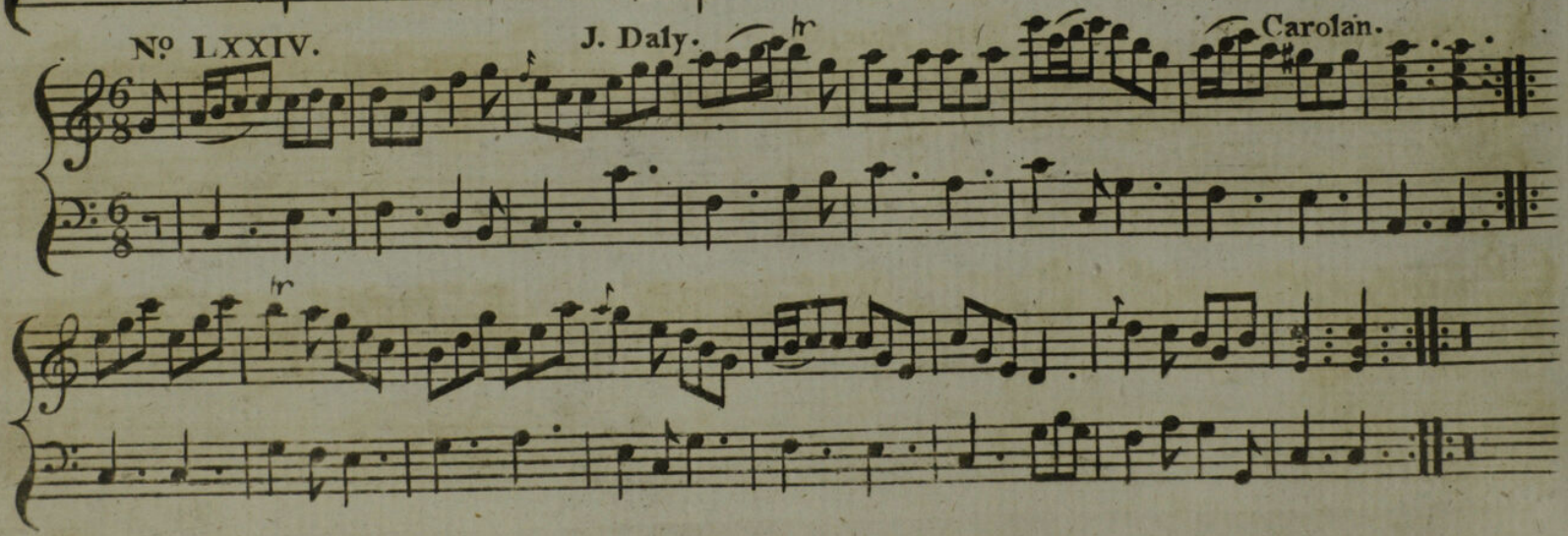
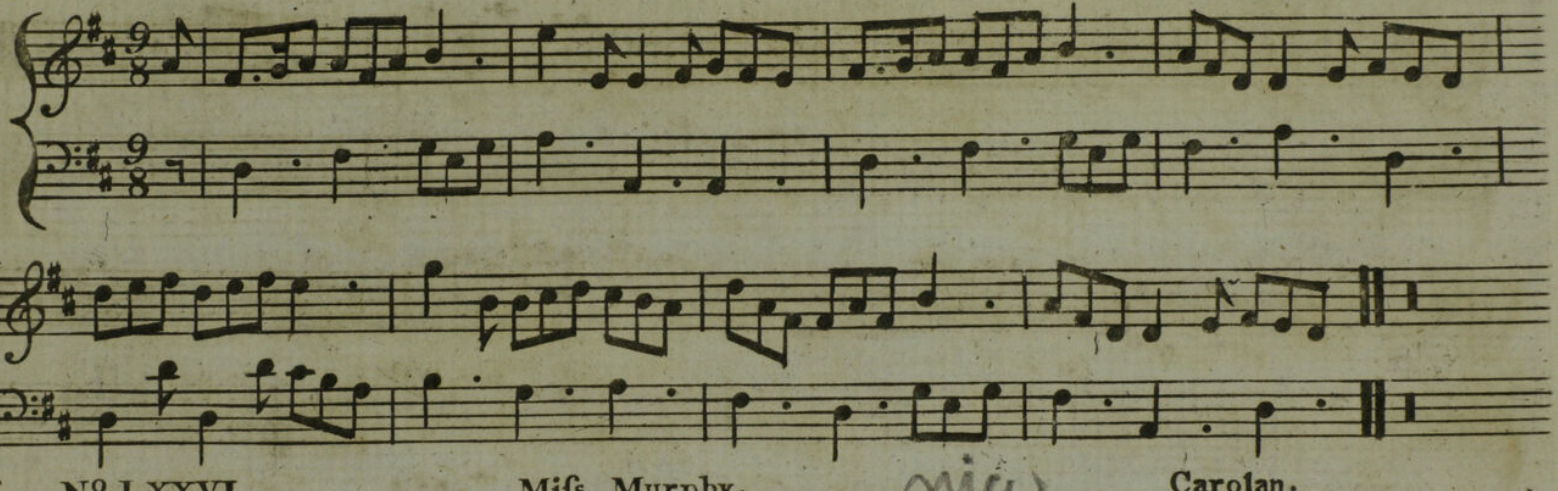
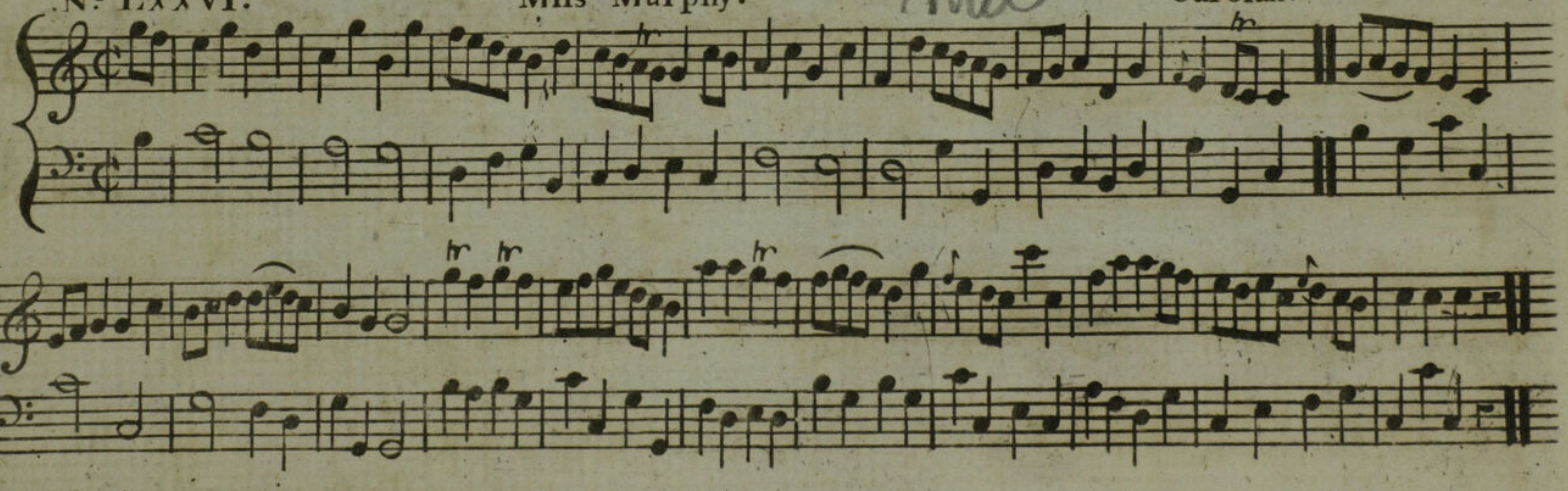


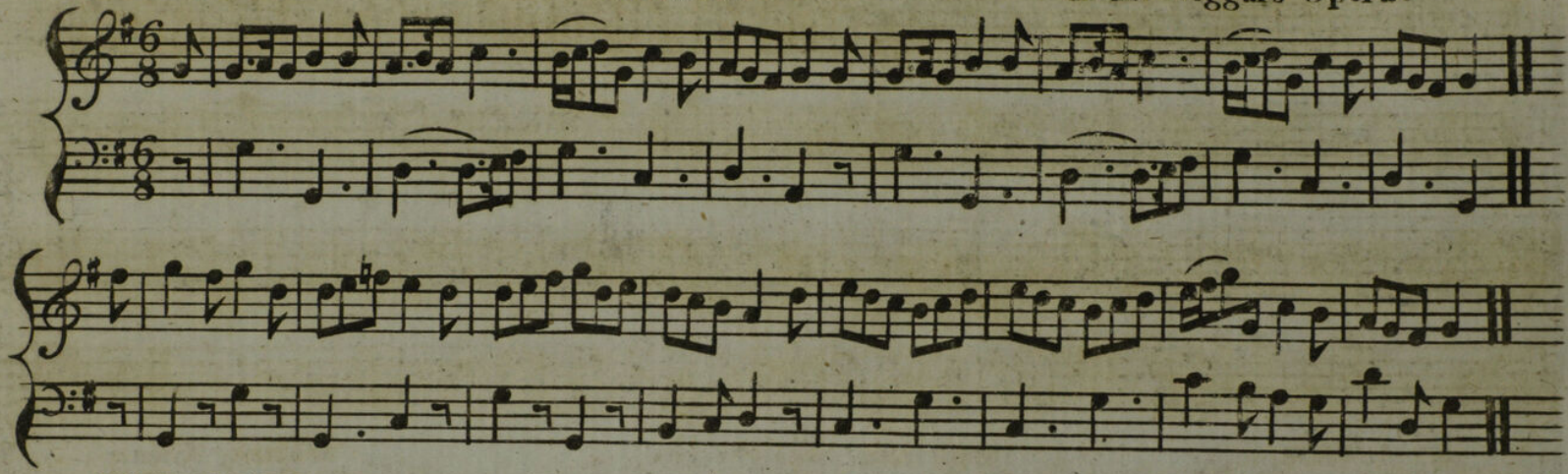
N? LXXV. Iriſh Air In the Poor Soldier.



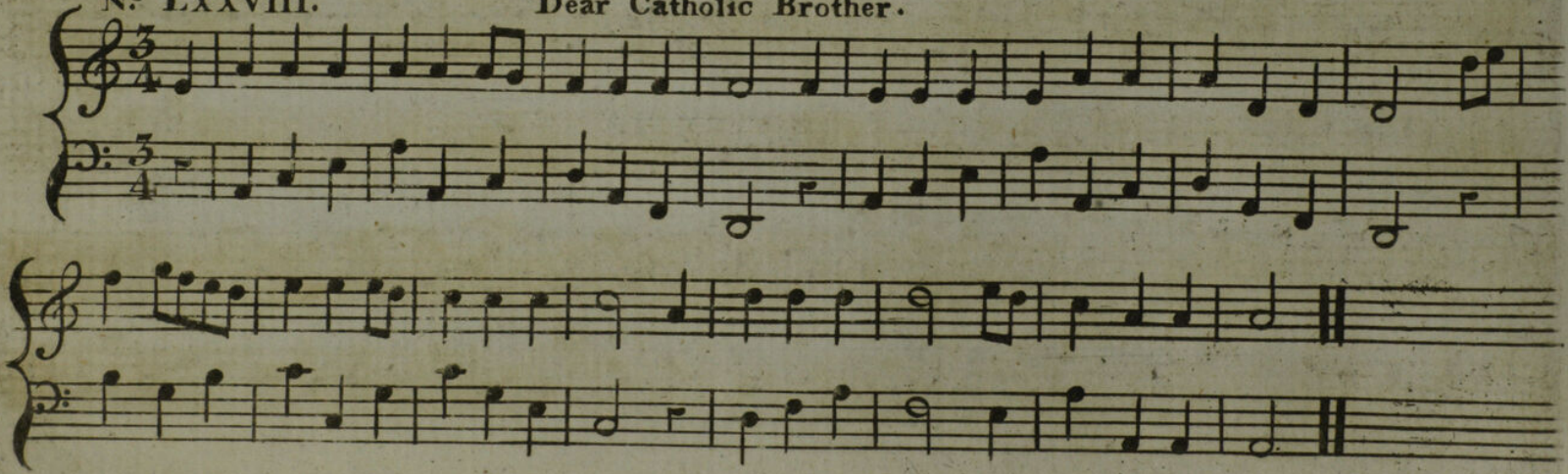
N? LXXVI. Miſs Murphy. Carolan.



Nº LXXVII. Lillibulero. In the Beggars Opera.



Nº LXXVIII. Dear Catholic Brother.



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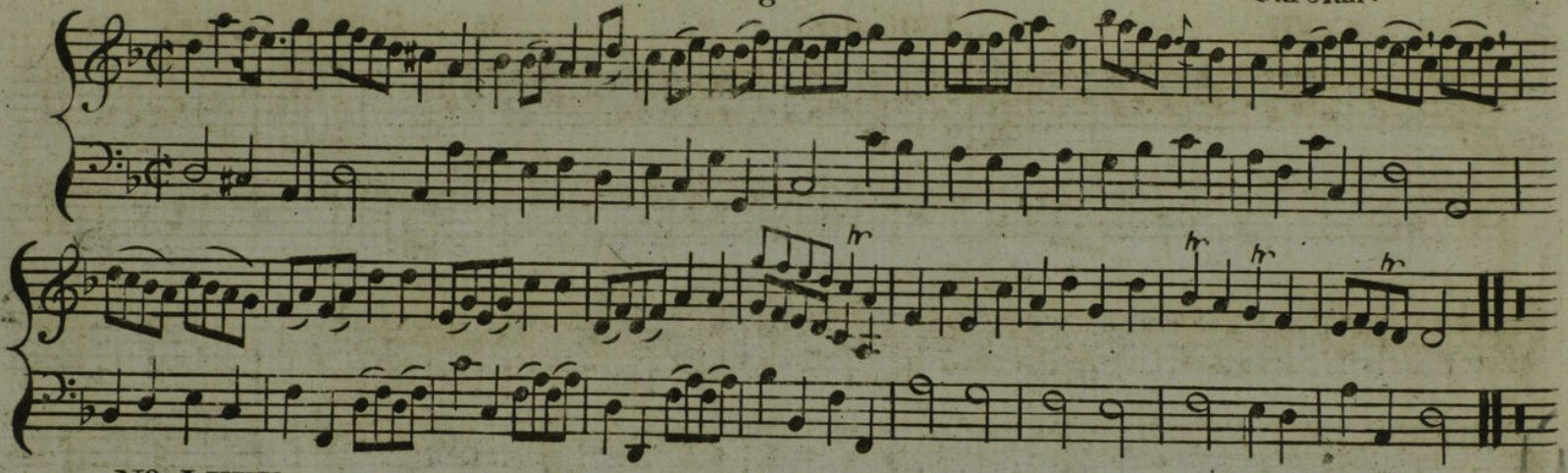
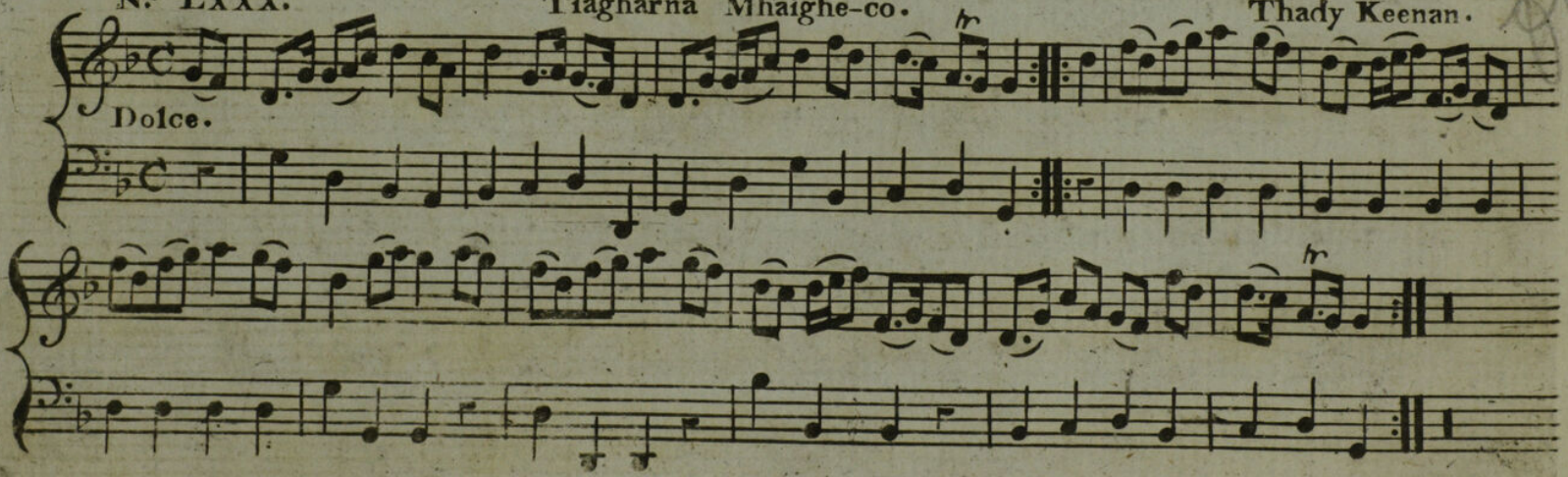


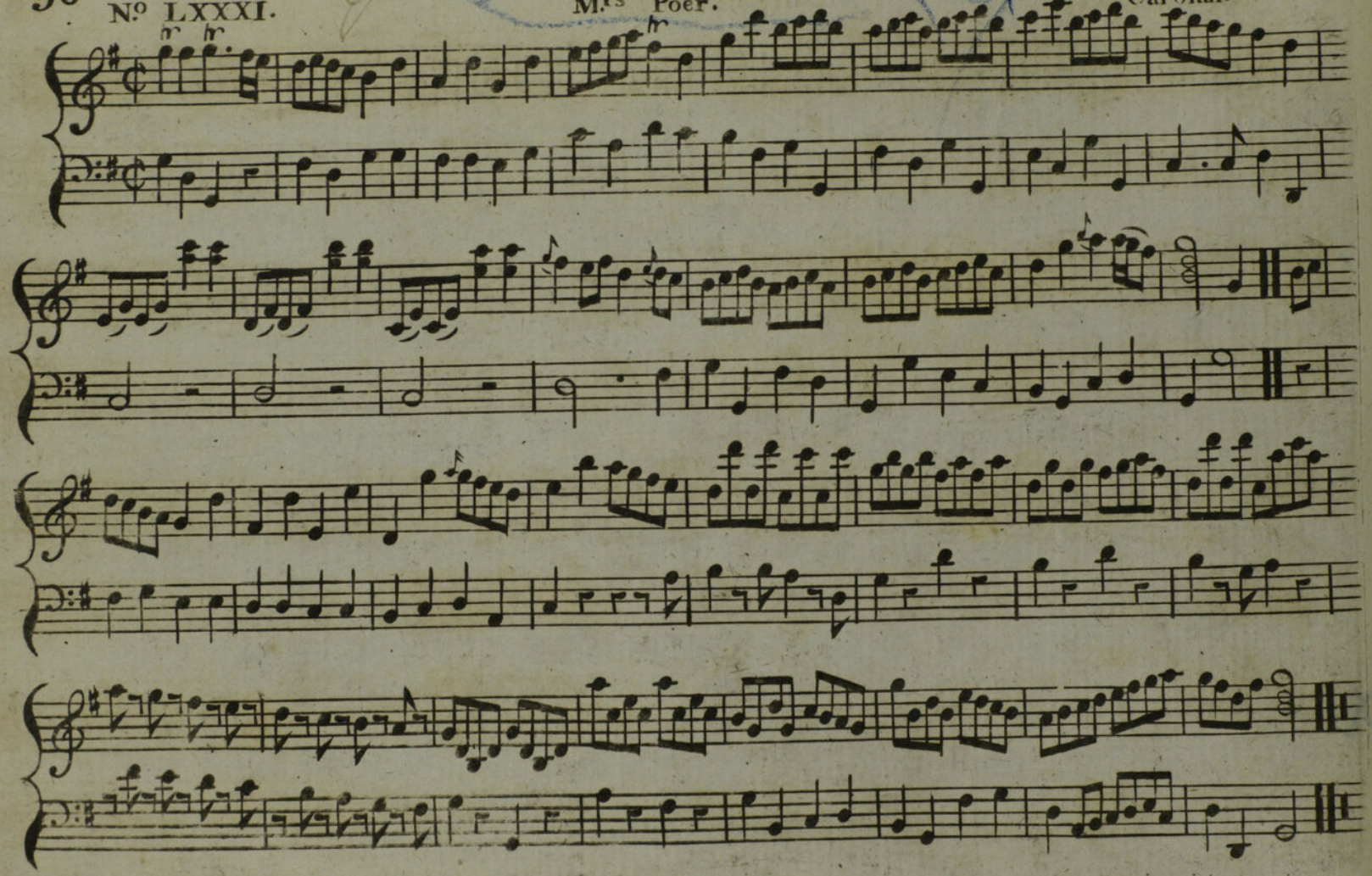
Nº LXXX. Tiagharna Mhaighe-co. Thady Keenan.



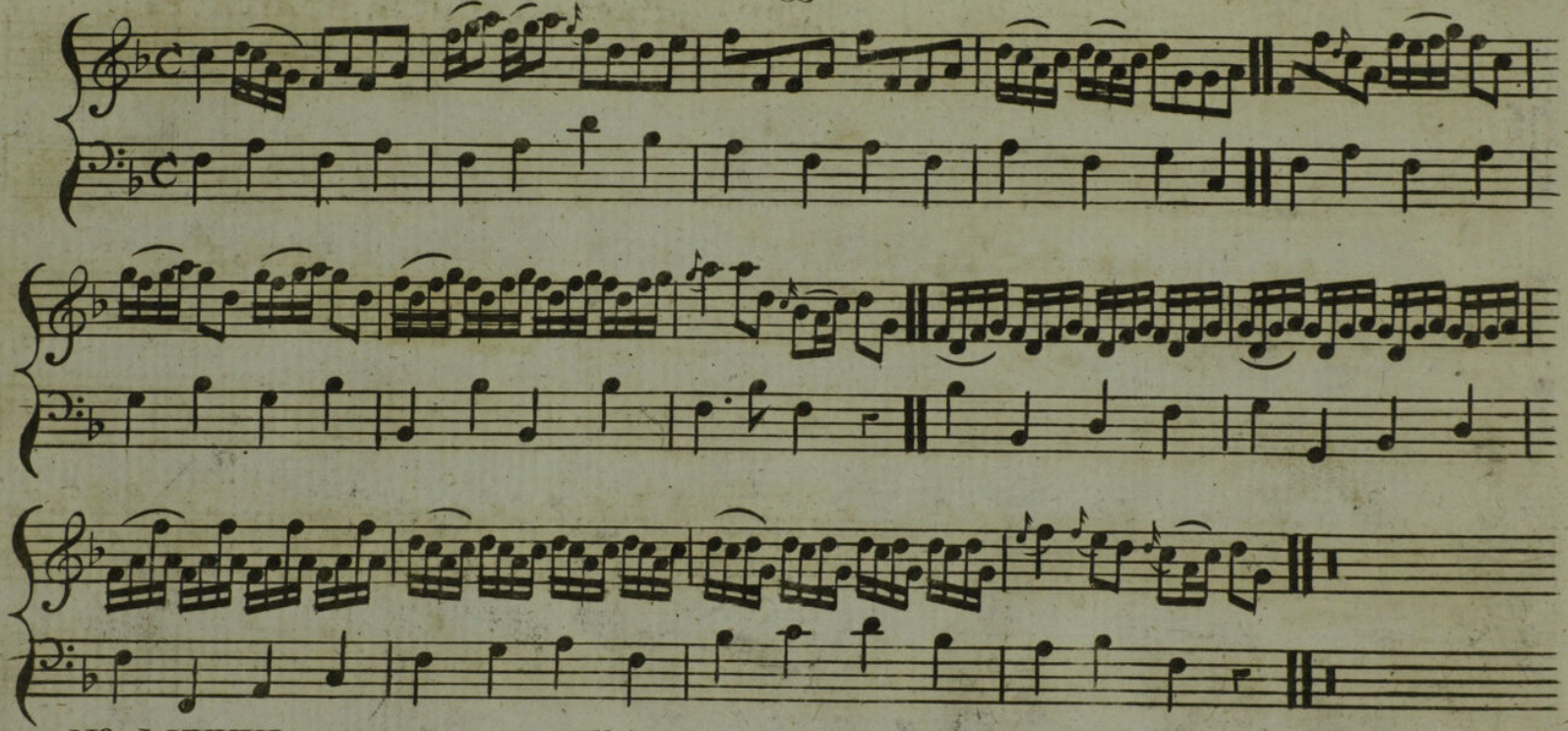
Nº LXXXI.

Mrs Poer.

Carolan.



Nº LXXXII. Carolan's Maggot.



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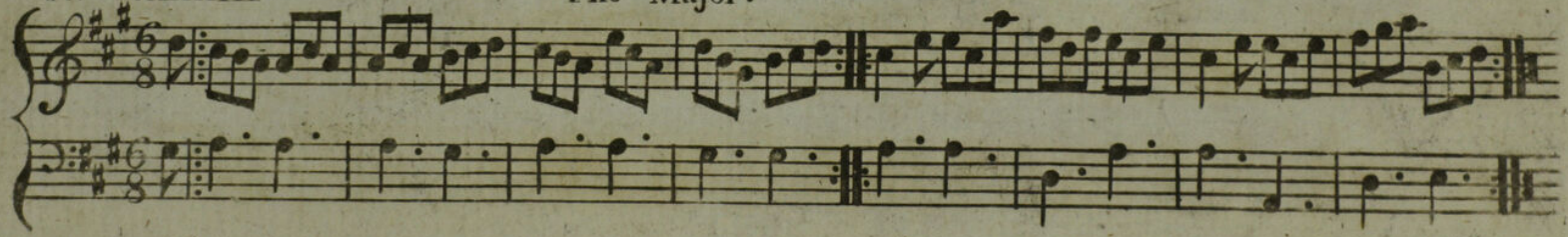
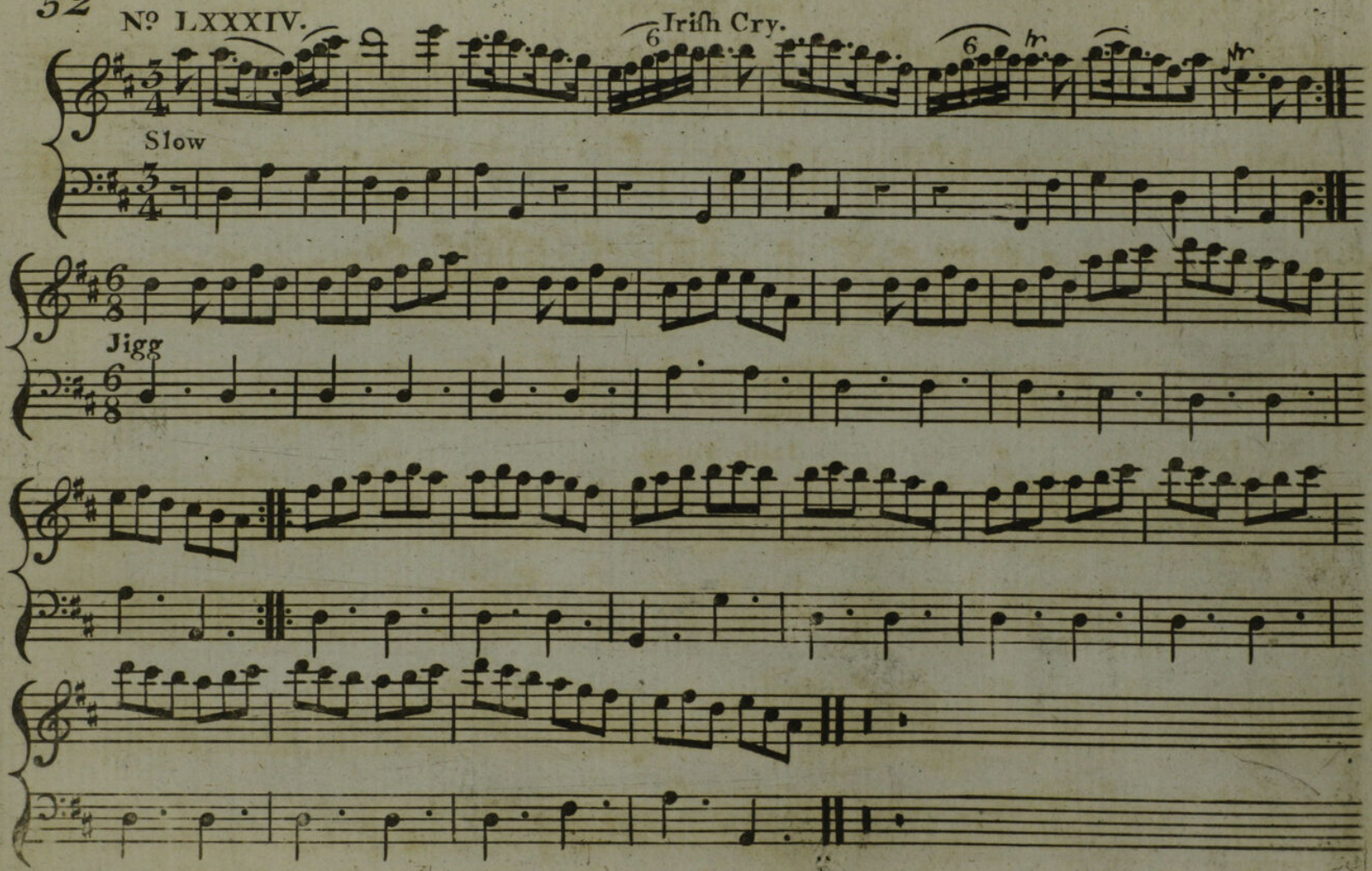
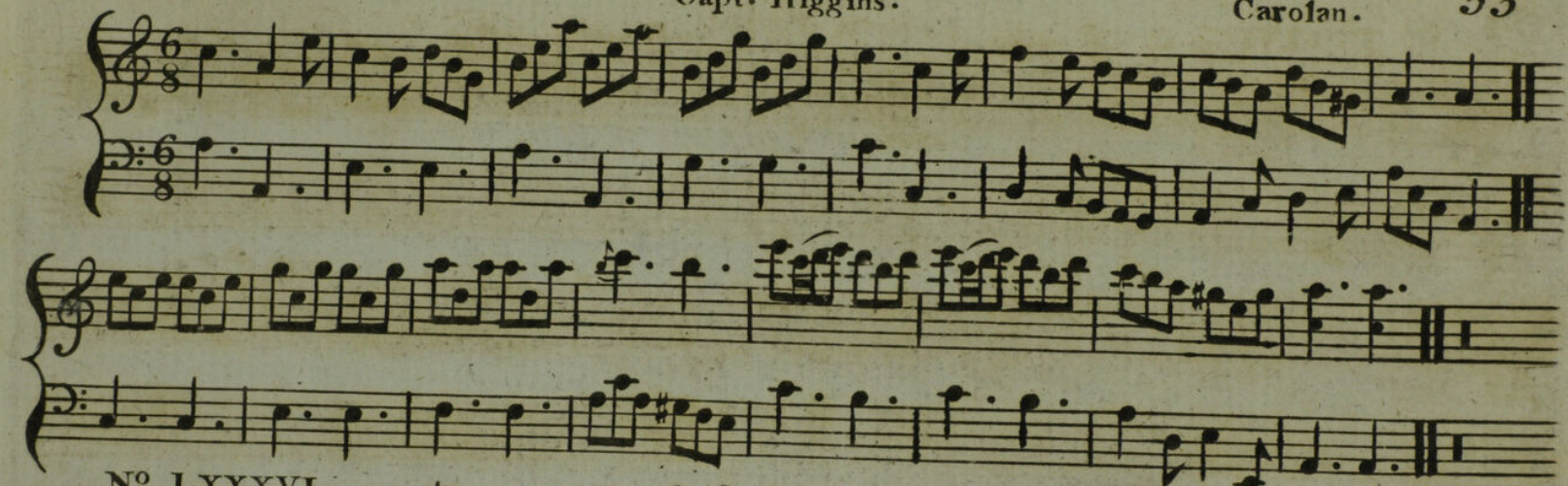
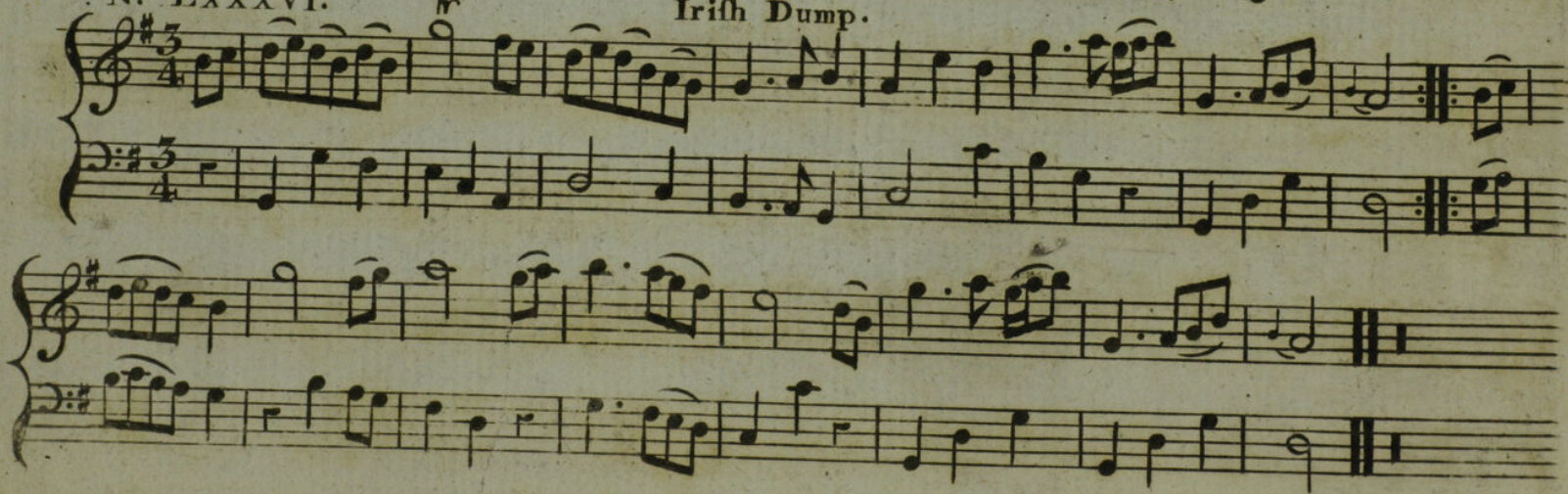



Nº LXXXIV.
Irish Cry.
Slow
Jigg

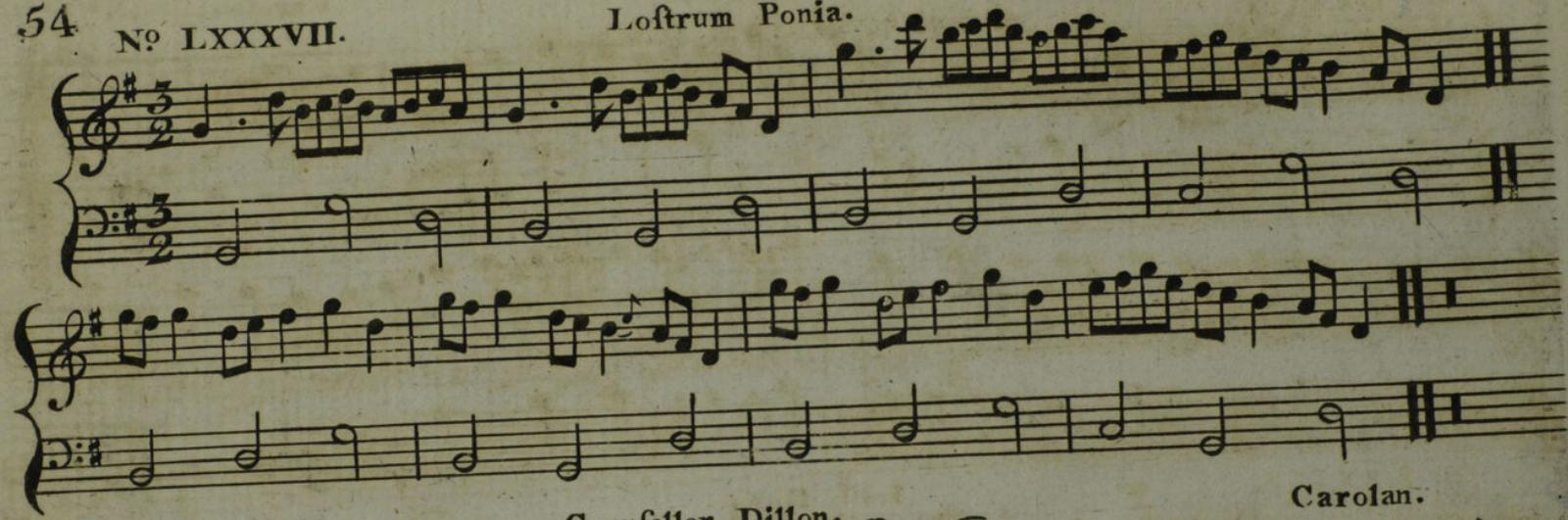
Nº LXXXV. Capt. Higgins. Carolan.



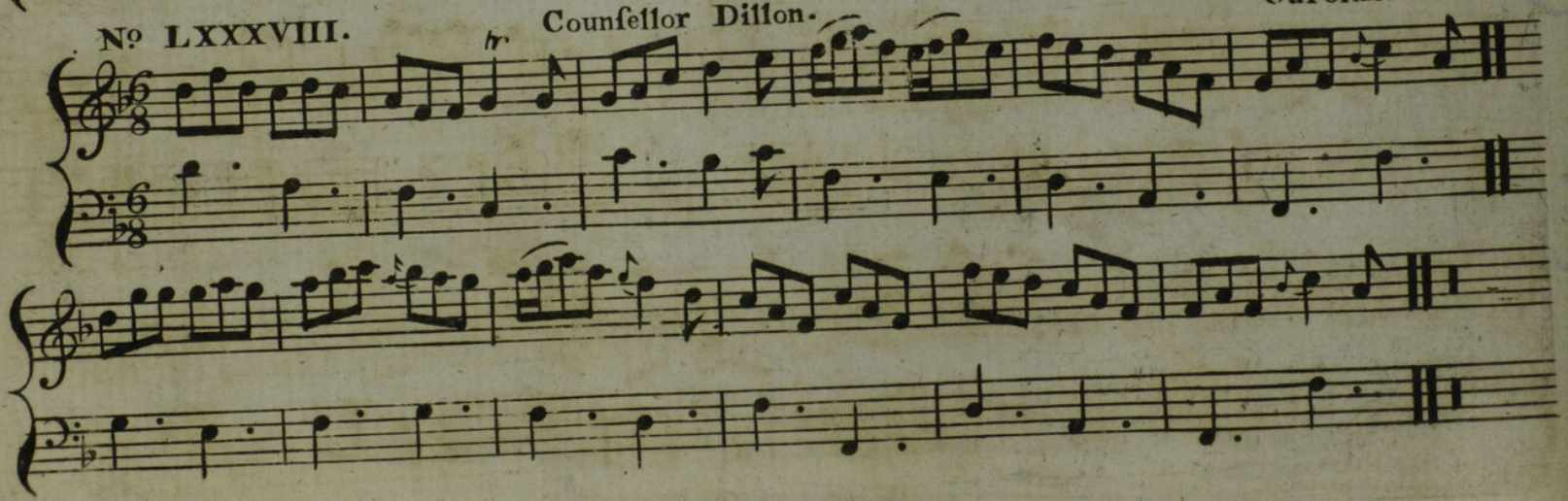
Nº LXXXVI. Irish Dump.



Nº LXXXVII. Loftrum Ponia.

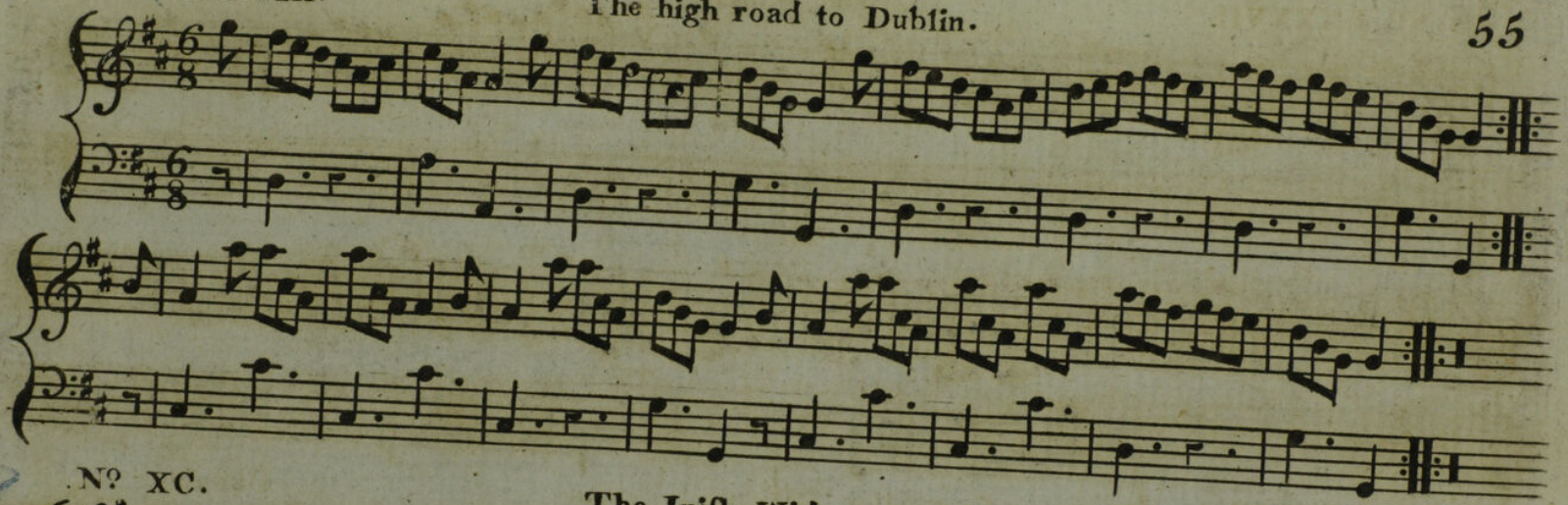


Nº LXXXVIII. Counfellor Dillon. Carolan.



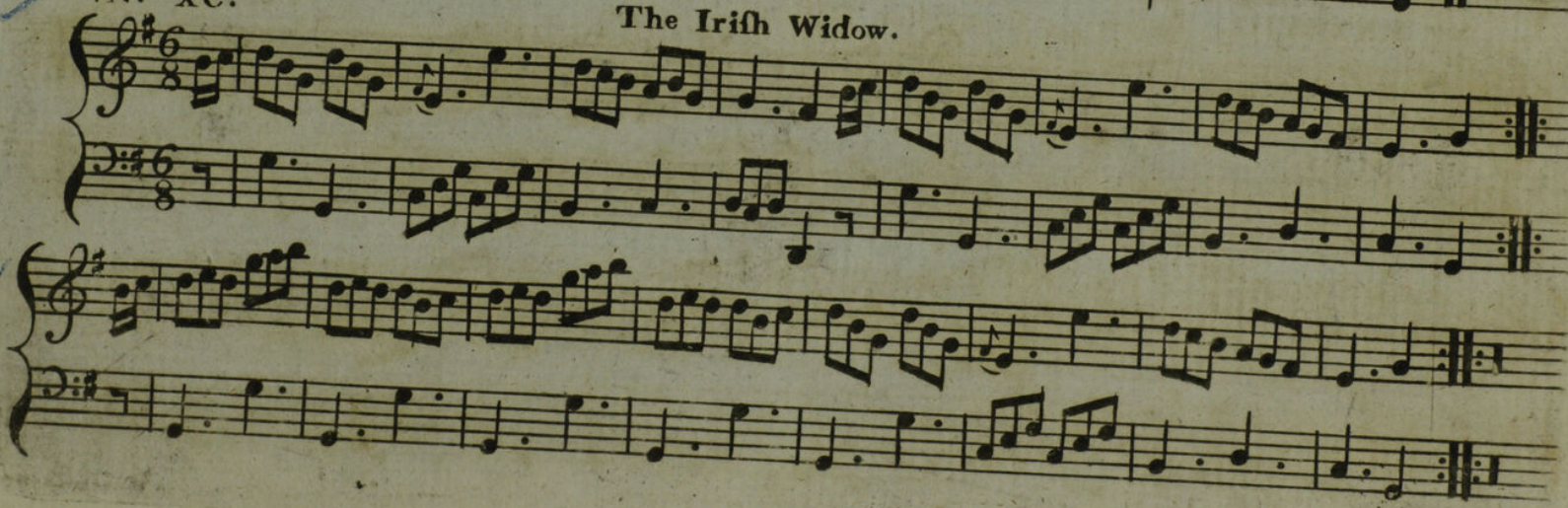
Nº LXXXIX.

The high road to Dublin.

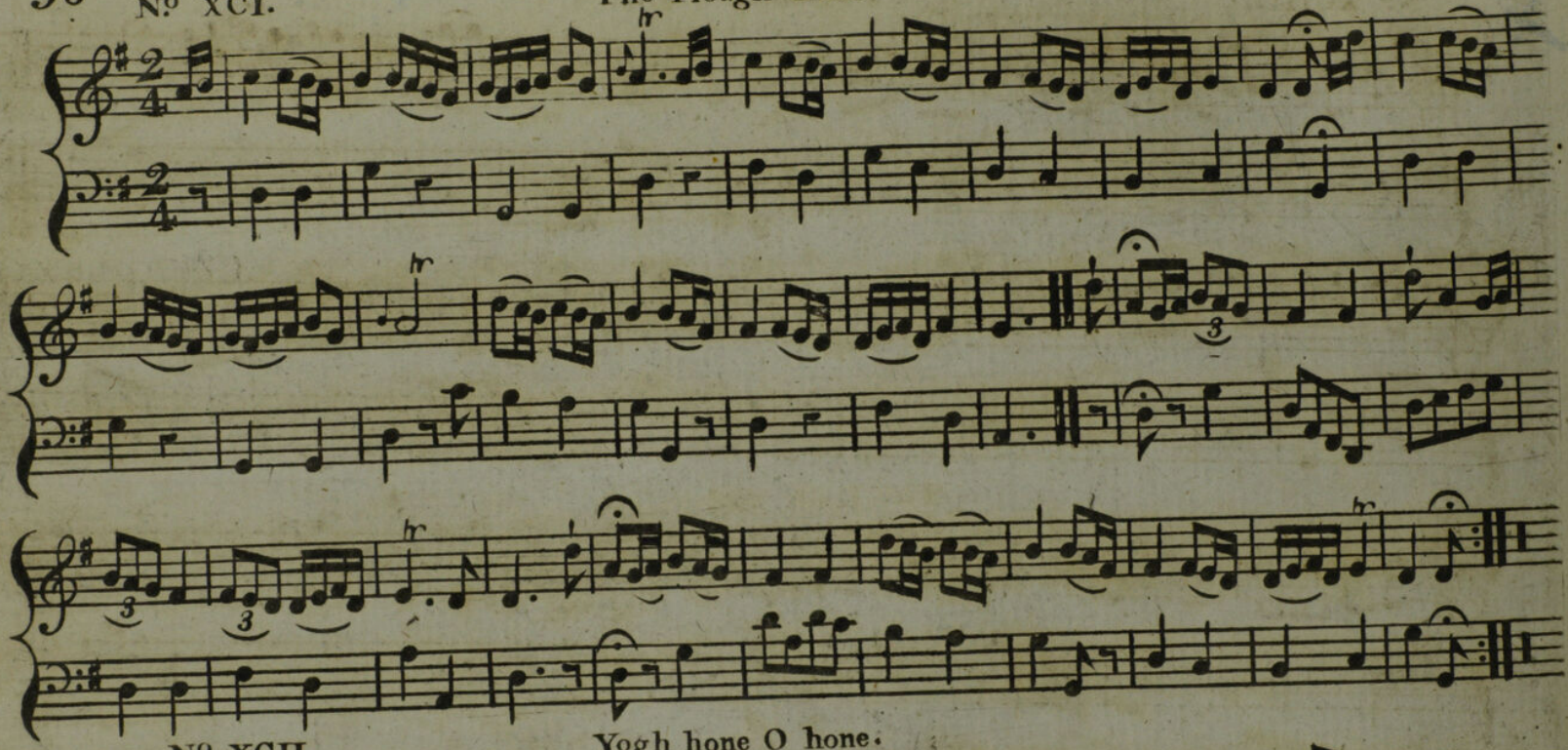


Nº XC.

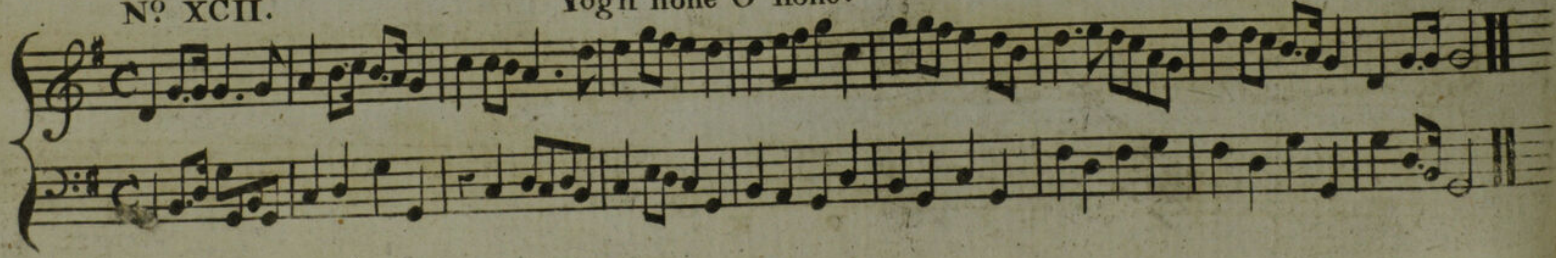
The Iriſh Widow.



Nº XCI. The Plough Tune.

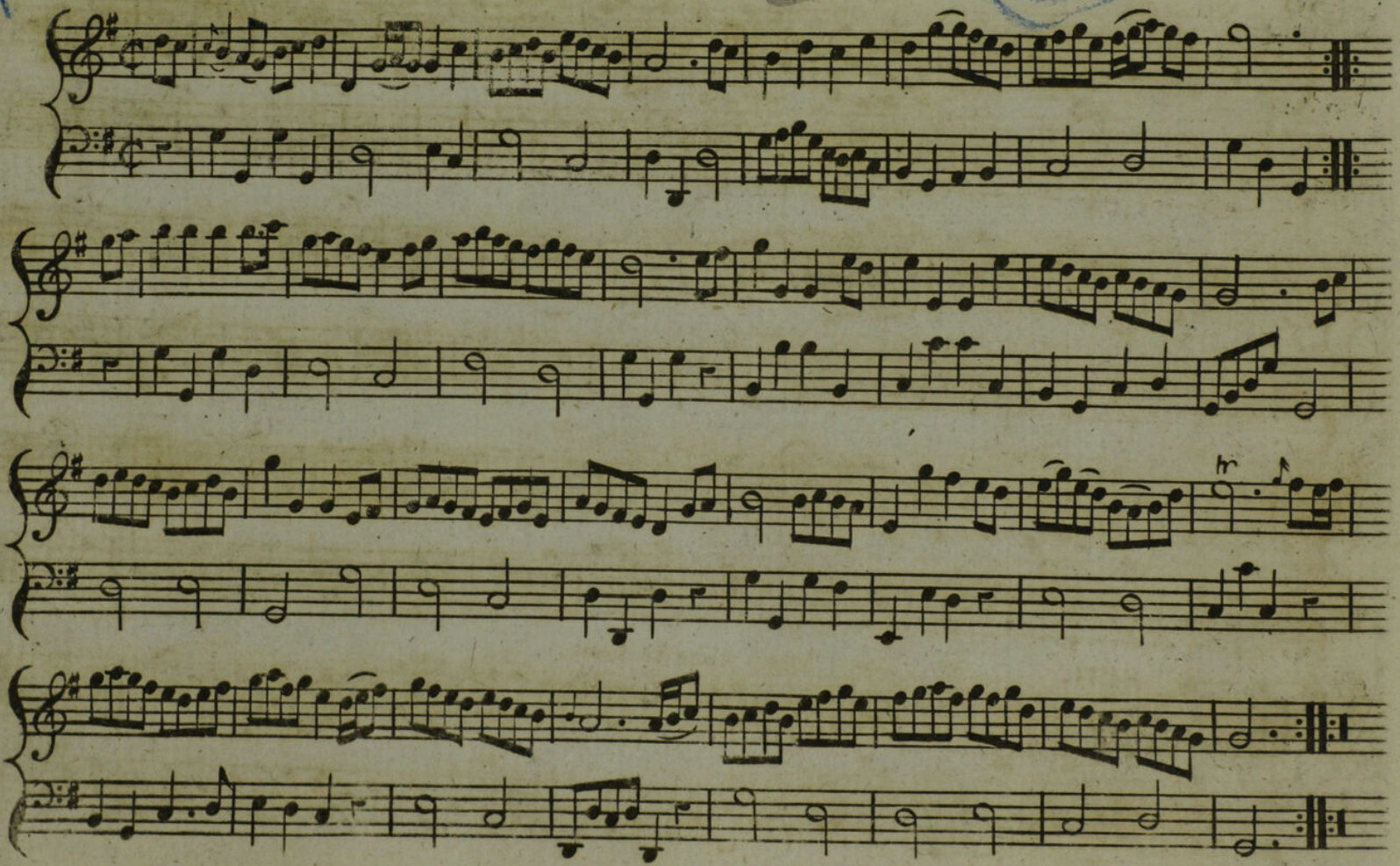


Nº XCII. Yogh hone O hone.



No. XCIII.

Thomas Burke



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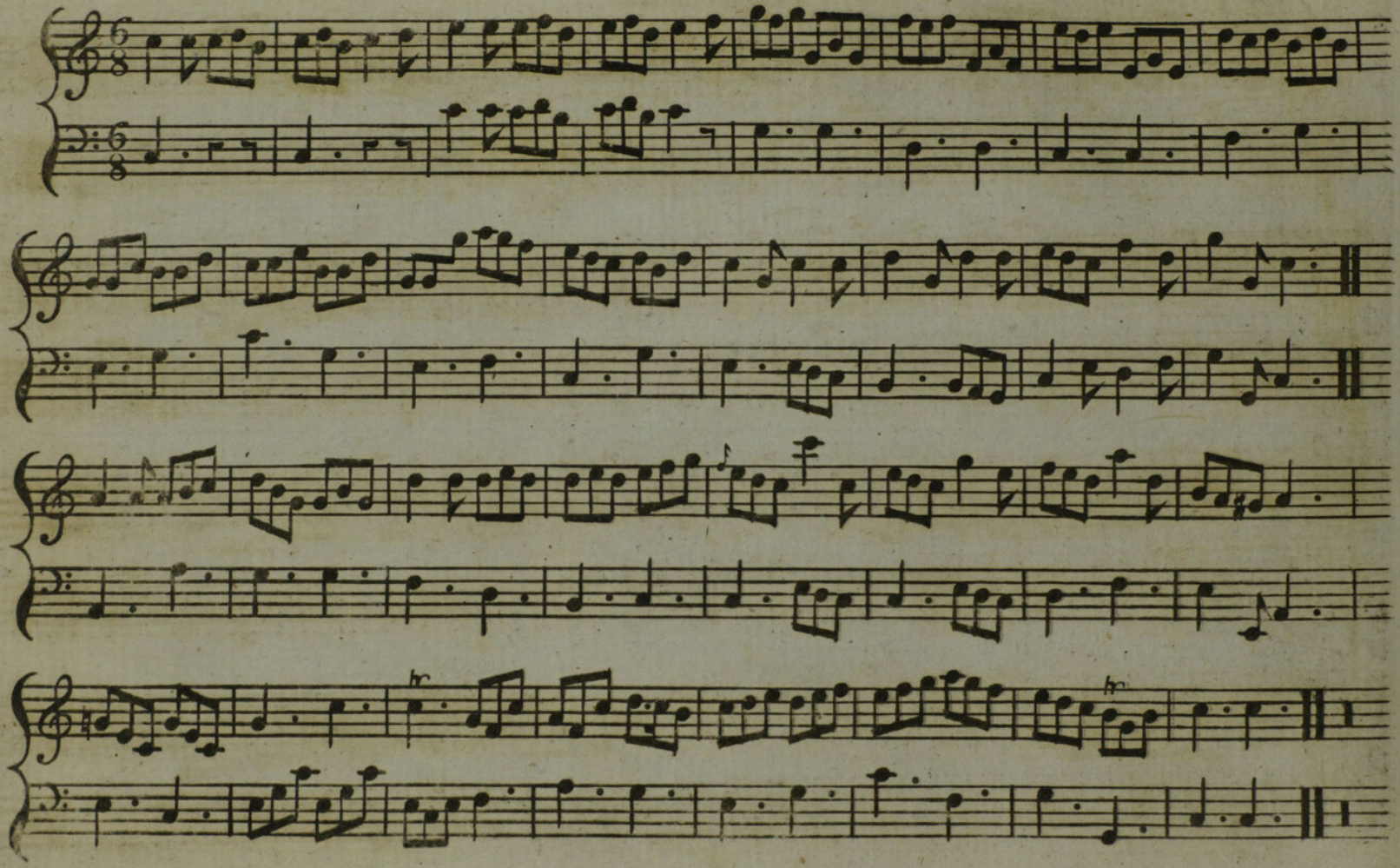
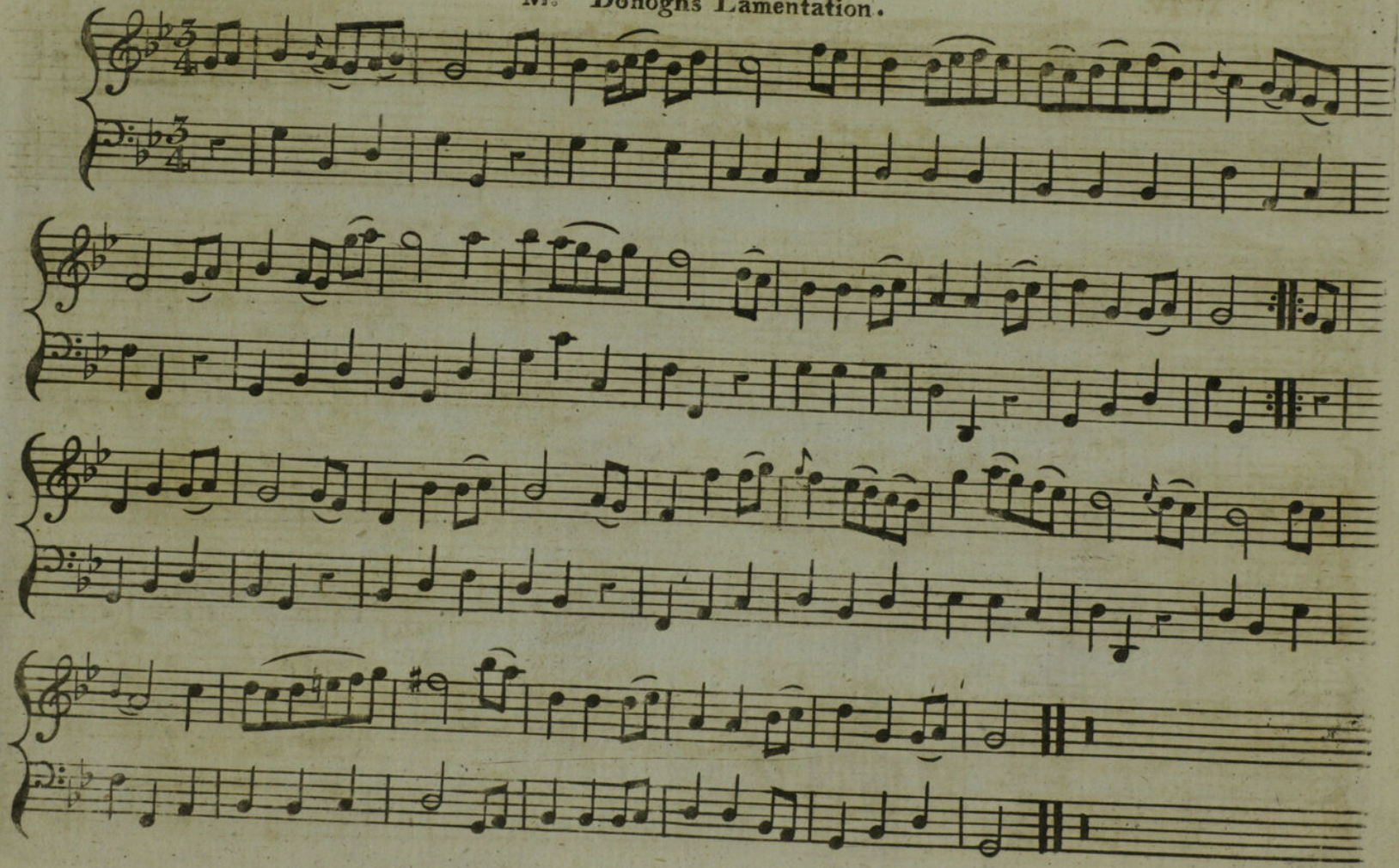


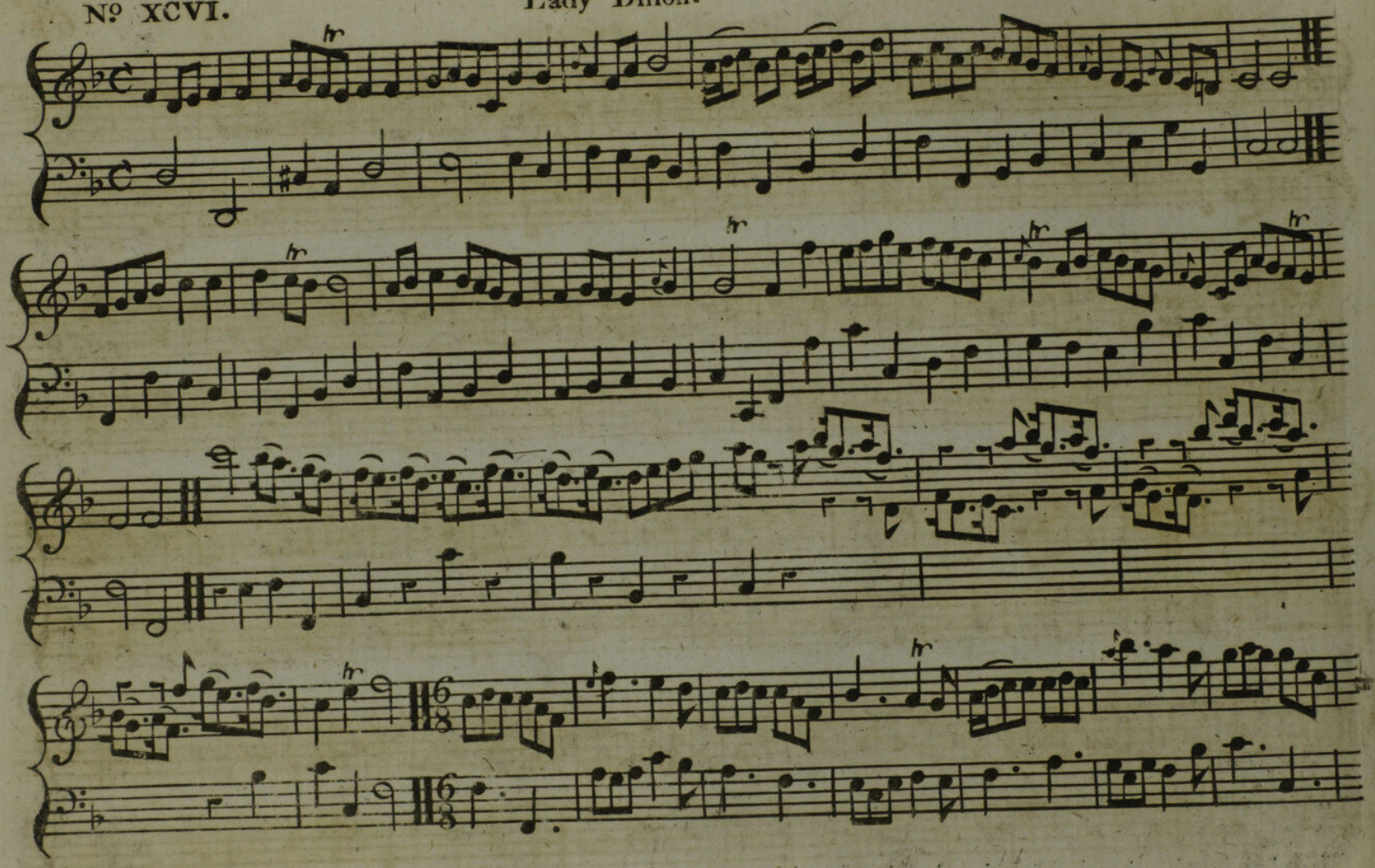
No XCV. Mc Donogh's Lamentation.

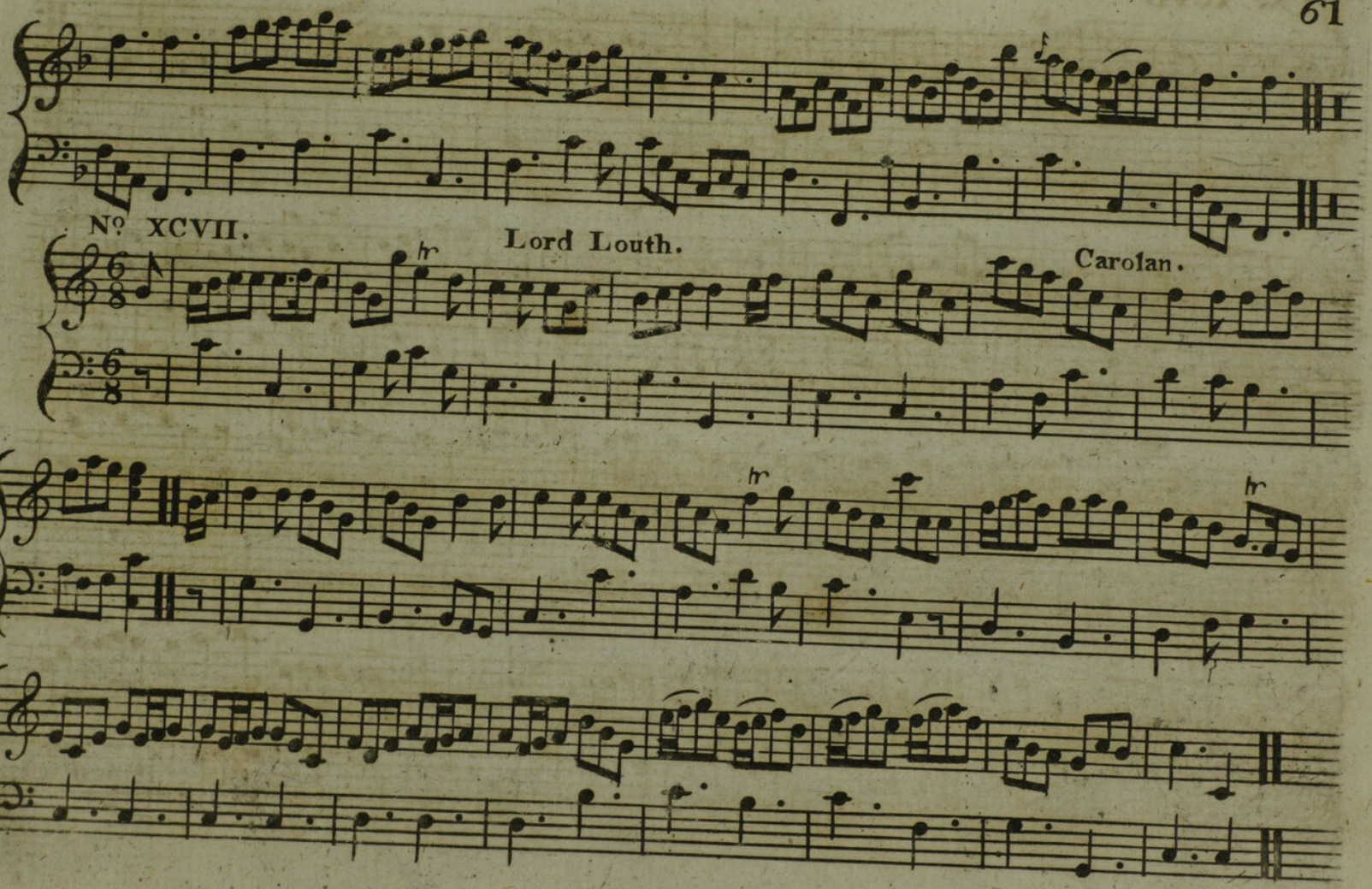


Nº XCVI.

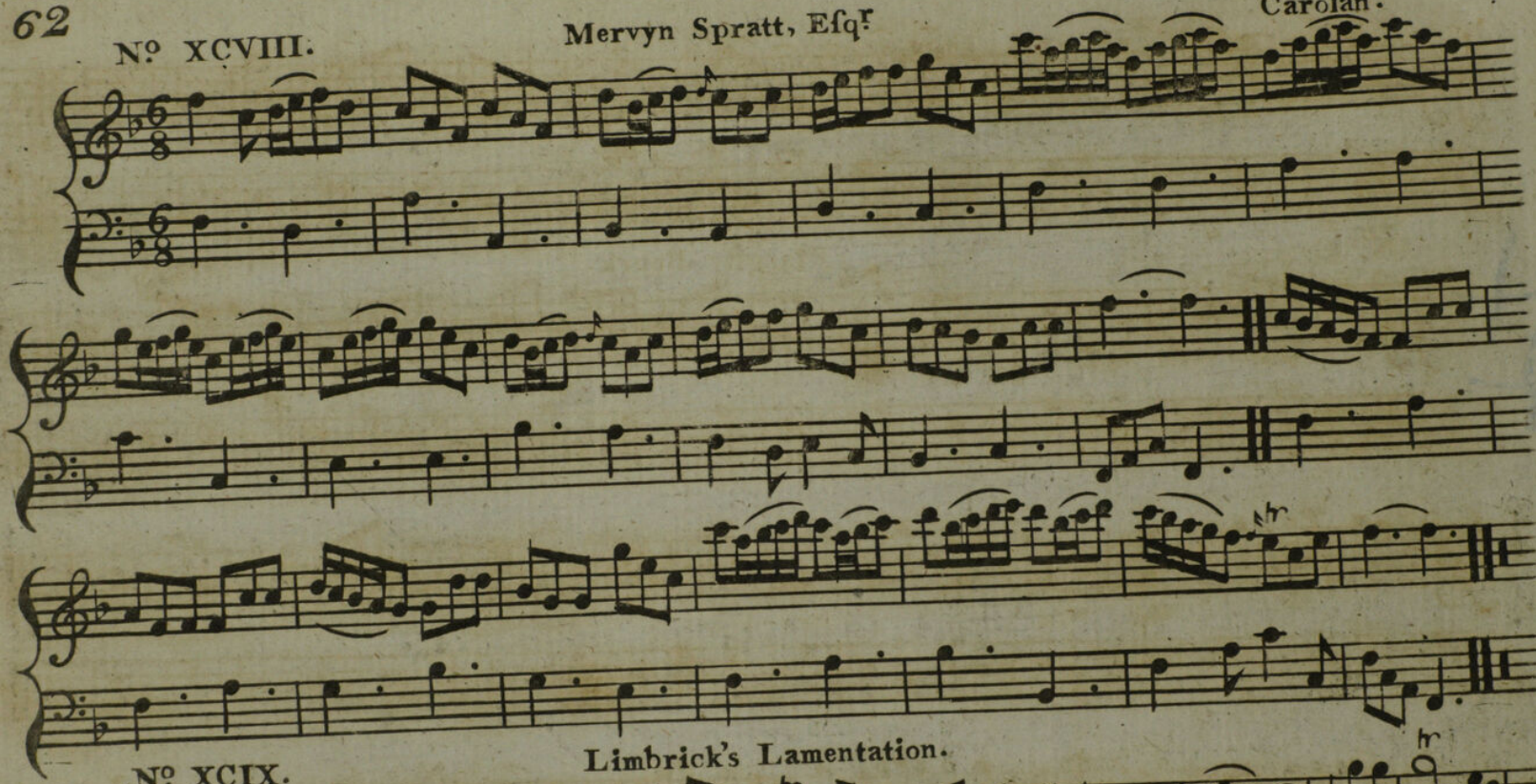
Lady Dillon.

Carolan.

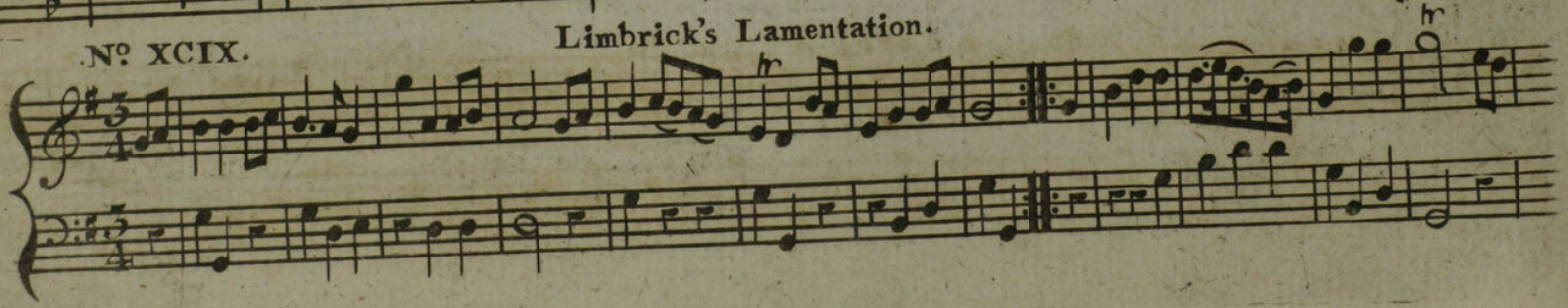


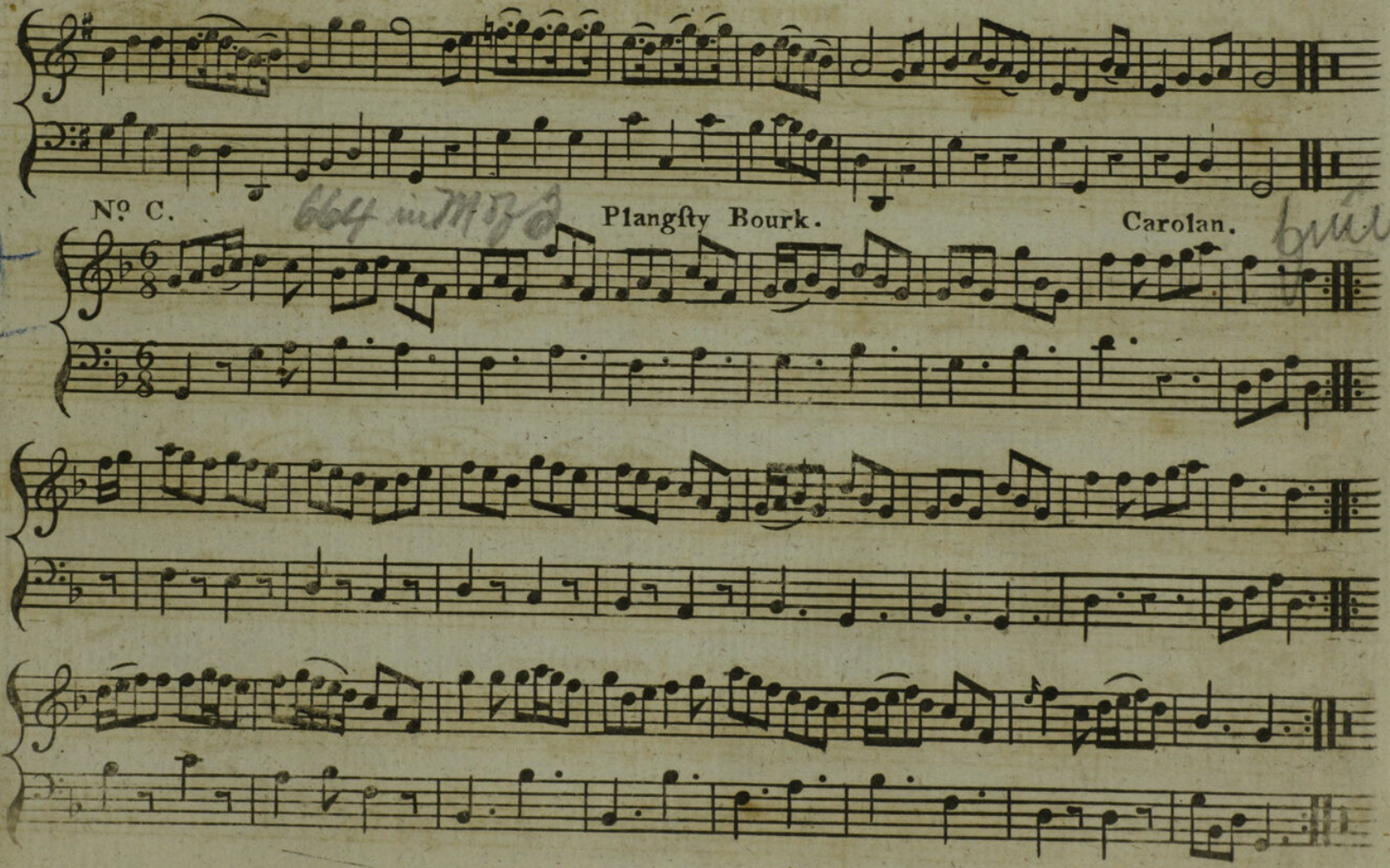

Nº XCVII.
Lord Louth.
Carolan.

Nº XCVIII. Mervyn Spratt, Esqr Carolan.



Nº XCIX. Limbrick's Lamentation.

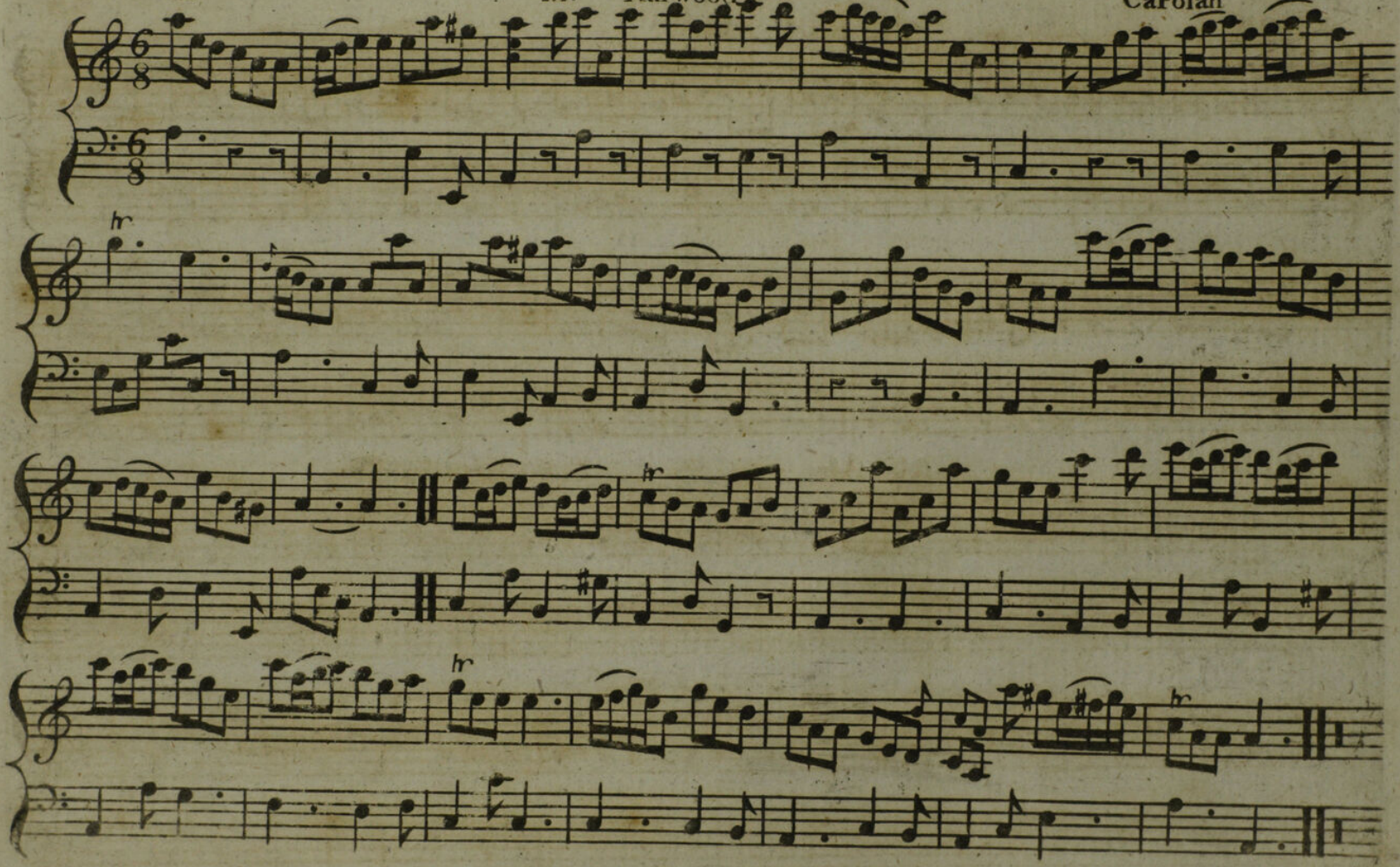



Nº C.
Plangsty Bourk.
Carolan.

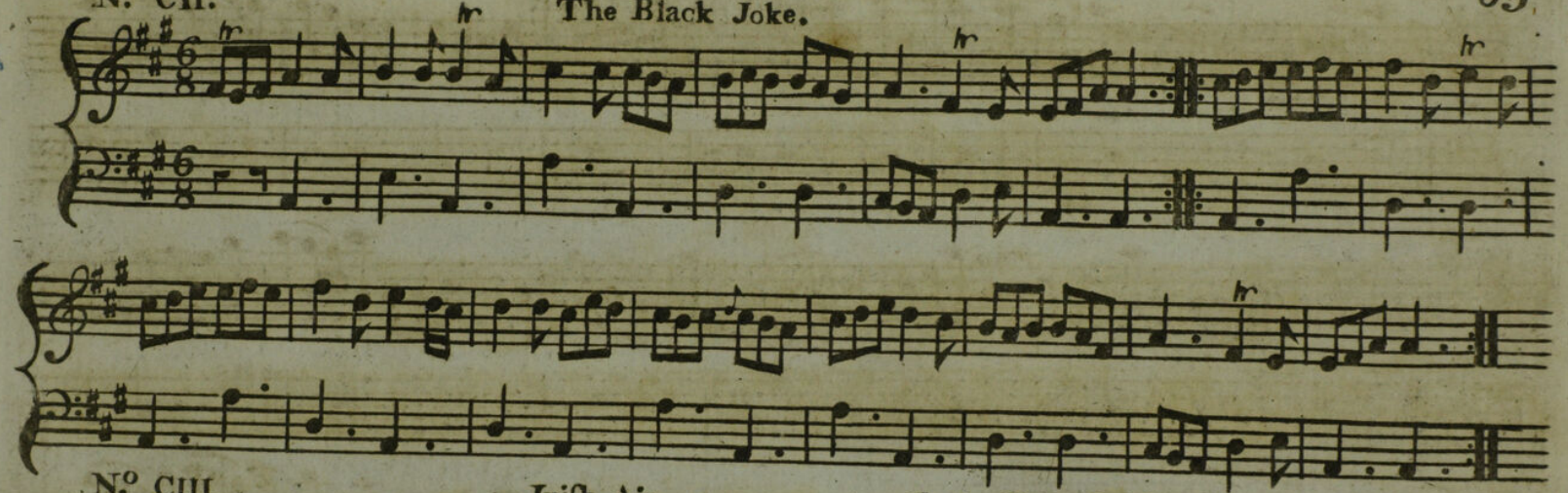
Nº CI.

Mrs Harwood

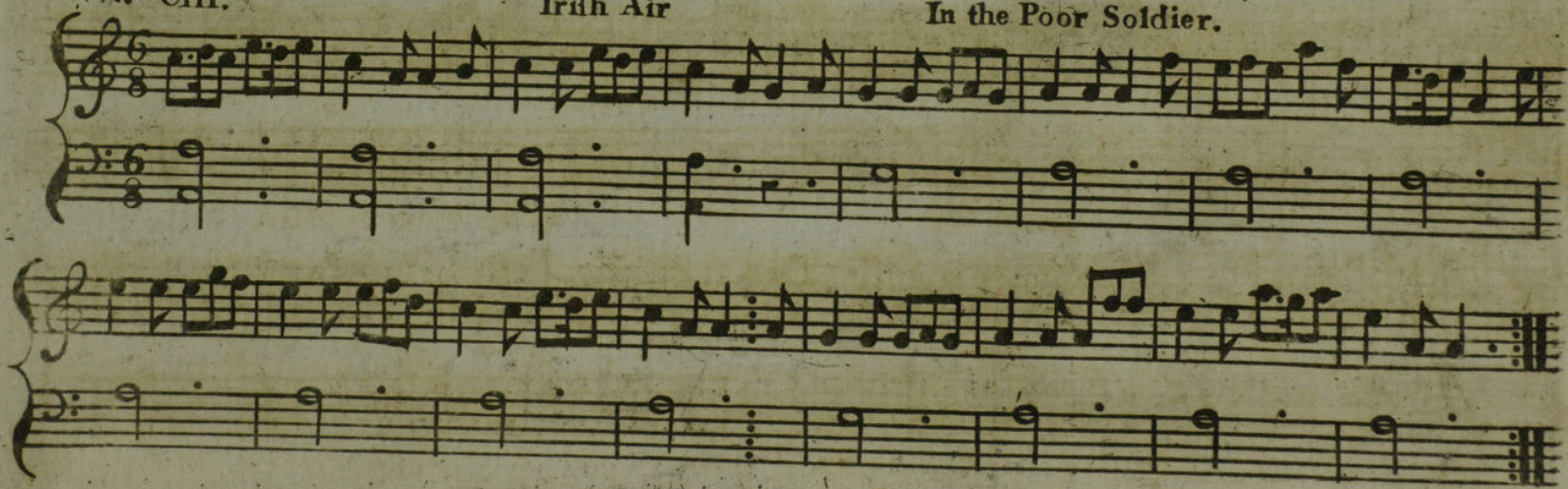
Carolan

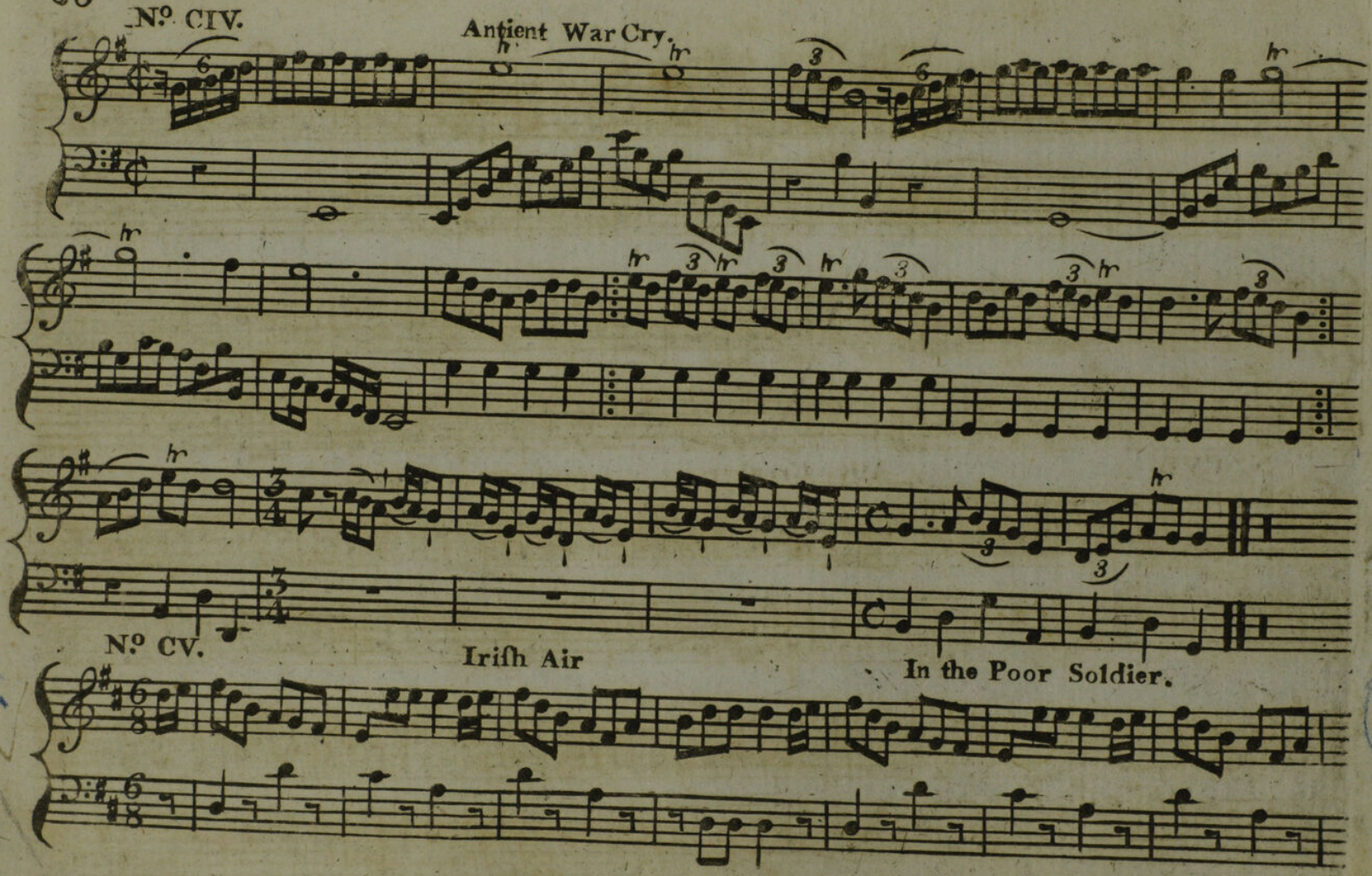


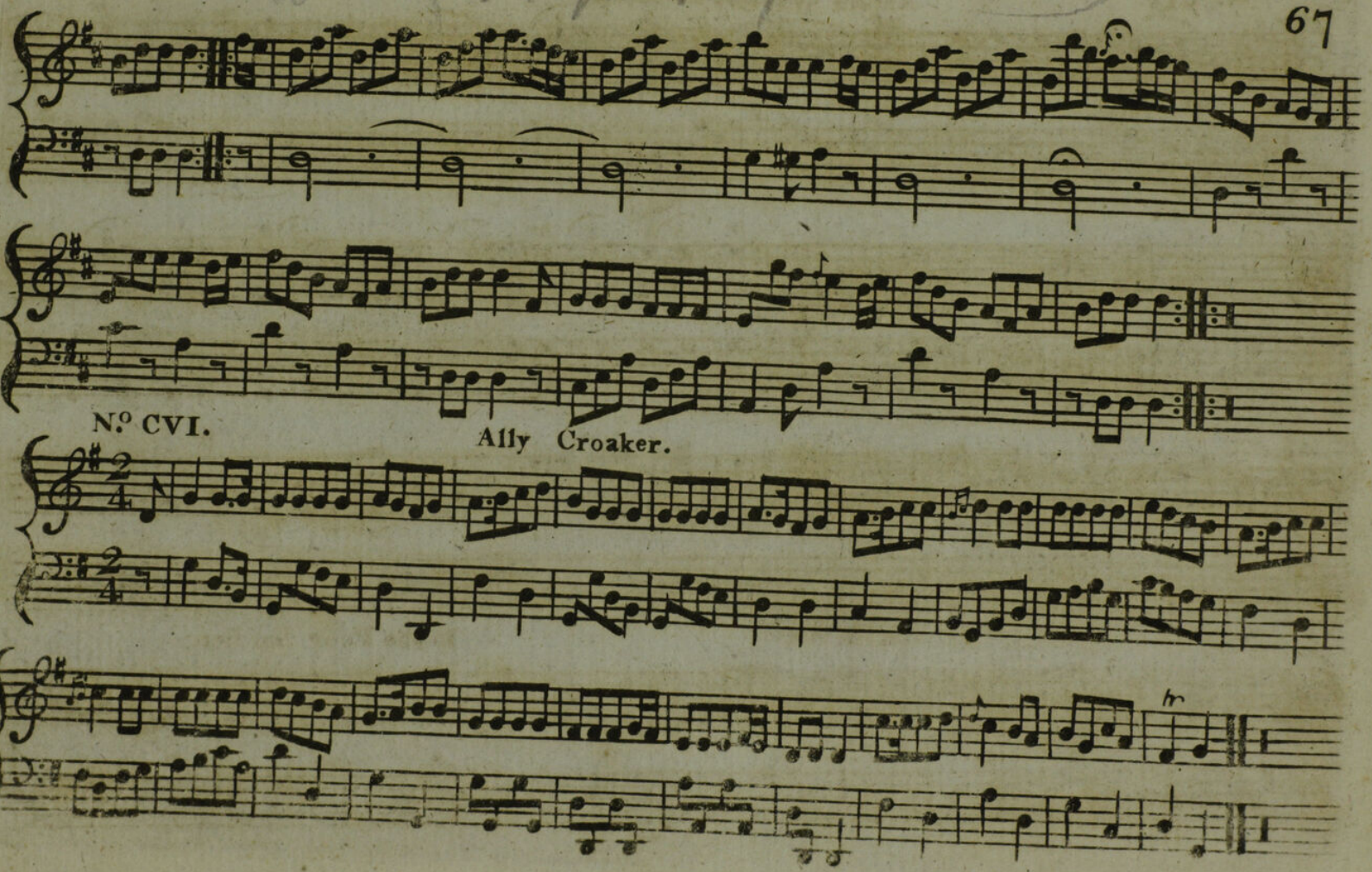
N.º CII. The Black Joke.



N.º CIII. Irish Air In the Poor Soldier.

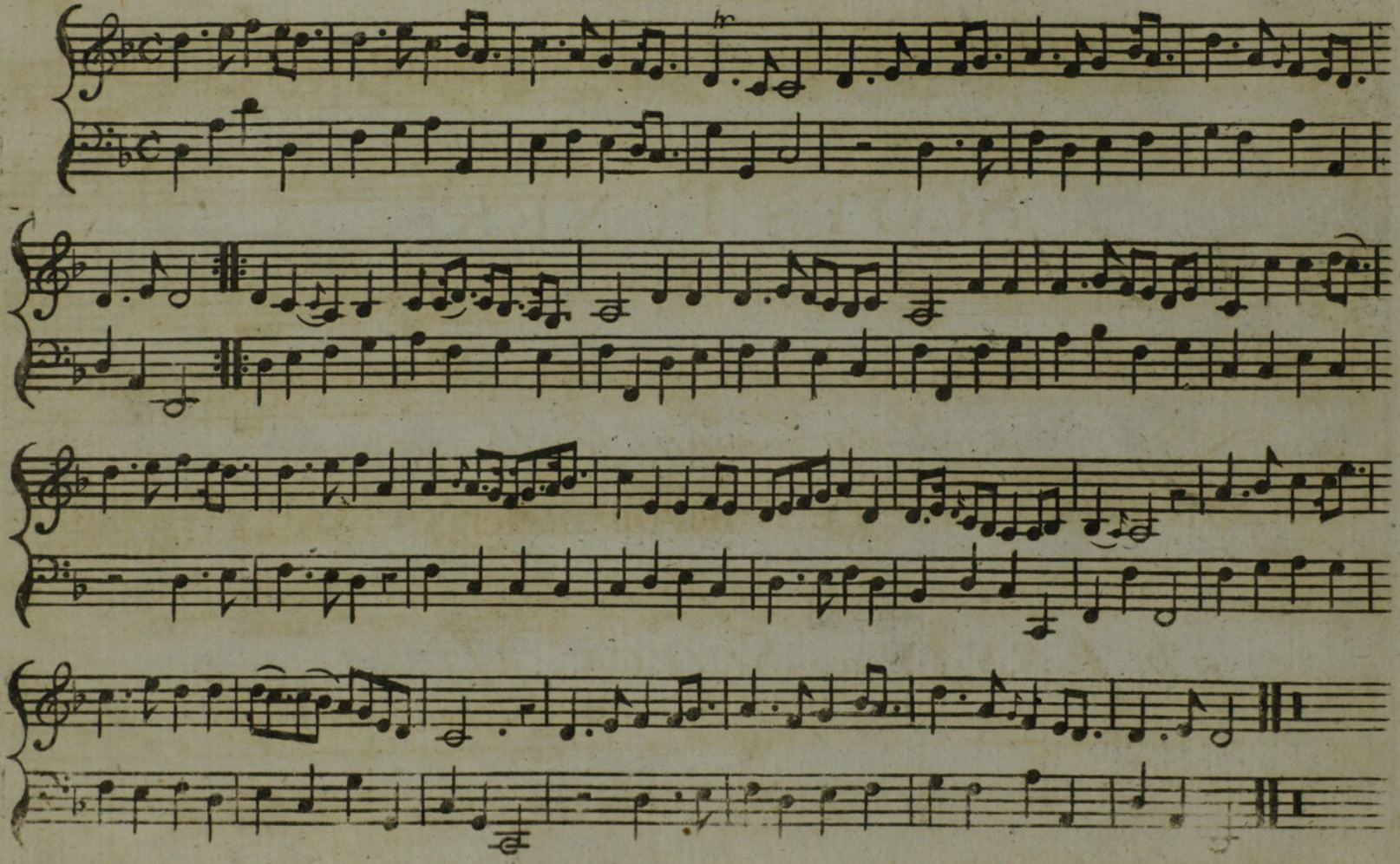



Nº CIV.
Antient War Cry.
Nº CV.
Irish Air
In the Poor Soldier.



N.º CVI.

Ally Croaker.

Nº CVII

Carolan's Devotion.