

ANACH CUAIN

traditional ballad, Co. Galway

very freely (mm ~ 88)

The musical score for 'ANACH CUAIN' is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 5, 9, 12, 15, 18, and 21 marked at the beginning of their respective lines. The tempo is indicated as 'very freely (mm ~ 88)' at the start. The first measure is marked with a forte 'f' dynamic. The second line begins with a 'rit.' (ritardando) marking. A double bar line is followed by a 'XII' marking, indicating a repeat or a specific section. The tempo then changes to 'mm ~ 50'. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and half notes, as well as triplets (marked with a '3') and rests. The dynamics include 'f' (forte), 'mp' (mezzo-piano), and 'p' (piano). The piece concludes with a final measure marked with a 'p' dynamic.

5 *rit.* XII *mm ~ 50* 3 *mp*

9 3

12 3

15 3

18 3

21 3



*If my health is spared I'll be long relating / Of the boat that sailed out from Anac Cuain
And the keening after of mother and father / As the laying out of each corpse was done.*

This is an adaptation of a song in the “sean nós” (old style) describing the loss of a boat named “Caisleán Nua” (“New Castle”) and nineteen passengers in Loch Corrib, Co. Galway, in September 1828. The words set to the undoubtedly much older air were composed by the blind poet Anthony Raftery (1784 - 1835). The sorrowful song has long outlived the memory of the actual event, although there has apparently been a recent effort in the area to erect a memorial to the tragedy.

“Anac Cuan” can be spelled a number of ways, but the basic meaning is something like “marshy harbor”. The boat actually departed from the town of Annaghdown (= Anac/Eanach Dúin, “marshy fort”), but the reason why two similar but different names are involved in the story of the ill-fated boat is not immediately apparent.

The remains of the boat - not much more than a large and leaky rowboat that was apparently the victim of an impatient sheep being brought to market - were located in the River Corrib in 1978 by divers from a club in Galway. One of the principal divers was - coincidentally - another Raftery. I don't know if he's a relative of the poet or not!