

BEAUTY IN TEARS

T. O'Carolan (1670 - 1738)

mm = 96

mf

4

9

13

17

slower on repeat

21

1 2

A composition of the blind harper Turloch O'Carolan (1670 - 1738), perhaps the best known of the Irish harpers and arguably the last of the Irish bards. O'Carolan (the O is occasionally omitted) was by all accounts a musician and composer of prodigious ability, in spite of (or perhaps because of) his blindness. In the tradition of the bards of ancient Ireland, O'Carolan supported himself by travelling throughout Ireland, performing at the houses of gentlefolk enlightened enough to appreciate him, and for whom many of his compositions are named, e.g. George Brabazon, Lord Inchiquin, Madame Maxwell. It was in the manor house of a Mrs. McDermott Roe - another friend and patroness of long standing - that Carolan died.

It is generally accepted that O'Carolan had encountered European baroque music during one or more sojourns in Dublin, and a number of wonderful - if probably apocryphal stories - have arisen concerning the continental musicians' amazement at the talents of the Irishman. One of the best-known of these tales has to do with O'Carolan's success in being able to compose instantaneously a piece in the best classical Italian style, thereby hugely impressing a visiting Italian composer (see the note on "Carolan's Concerto", p. 41).

There are many similarities between "Beauty in Tears" and several other tunes, including a piece of Welsh origin now known as "The Ash Grove", but which preceded which is a discussion for some other time.

Captain Francis O'Neill, in his *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, offers this fitting epitaph for Carolan:

Uniting in his person the four-fold avocations of his race poet, composer, harper, and singer - O'Carolan may well be regarded as the last true bard of Ireland; but he possessed none of their ruling spirit, for he was more festive than patriotic ...[he was] the happiest harper who has ever repaid the loss of sight by the felicities of sound.