

Carolan's Concerto

Alternative title, 'Mrs. Poer' (Mrs. Power). This is one of O'Carolan's best-known compositions. Mrs. Power (Elizabeth Keating) was the wife of David Power of Coorheen House, Loughrea, Co. Galway. She was the subject of another of O'Carolan's tunes, as was their daughter Fanny. The following anecdote is in Oliver Goldsmith's essay on O'Carolan, 1760:

'Being once in the house of an Irish nobleman, where there was a musician present who was eminent in his profession, Carolan immediately challenged him to a trial of skill. To carry the jest forward, his Lordship persuaded the musician to accept the challenge, and he accordingly played over on his fiddle the fifth concerto of Vivaldi. Carolan immediately taking his harp, played the whole piece after him, without missing a note, though he had never heard it before; which produced some surprise; but their astonishment increased, when he assured them he would make a concerto in the same taste himself, which he instantly composed, and that with such spirit and elegance, that it may compare (for we have it still) with the finest compositions of Italy.'

110