

Planxty Browne ('Maggie Brown')

Turlough O'Carolan*
(* see notes below)

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. It consists of six staves of music. The first staff has chords G, C, D, G. The second staff has chords G, C, D, G, with first and second endings. The third staff has chords G, D, C, G, D. The fourth staff has chords G, D, C, D, A, D. The fifth staff has chords C, G, C, G, Am, G, D. The sixth staff has chords G, Em, Am, D, G, D, with first and second endings.

arr. Peter McLaren

In considering tunes for his definitive work 'Carolan: The Life, Times and Music of an Irish Harper', Donal O'Sullivan suggested this tune had characteristics typical of an authentic Carolan composition. His source for it was Francis O'Neill's 'The Music of Ireland', where it was titled 'Planxty Browne'.

O'Neill's collection contained 75 tunes that he had attributed to Carolan. Many of these tunes existed in alternative collections and O'Sullivan was able to authenticate them as genuine Carolan compositions. Some of the O'Neill tunes O'Sullivan was able to readily identify as clearly not being Carolan compositions.

O'Sullivan was comfortable claiming this piece for Carolan and included in his collection, listing it as No. 180 among the 'Tunes Without Titles' category. Other musicologists have argued that the tune may have been the work of Scottish fiddler Niel Gow, arguing that 'Planxty Browne' in O'Neill's 1903 publication is identical to Gow's 'Miss Margrett Brown's Favourite' published in 1792.

This tune is known by a multitude of alternative titles. I first learned the tune as 'Maggie Brown' from concertina player Sandra Kerr in April 2003. Repeats are optional — in both the O'Sullivan and O'Neill collections it is notated without repeats.