

# Sheebeg An Sheemore

Turlough O'Carolan

Arr. by Steve Kaufman

Key of D

The musical score is arranged in four systems, each with a treble clef staff for the melody and a guitar staff for the accompaniment. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes the following elements:

- System 1 (Measures 1-5):** Melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by quarter notes D4, E4, F#4, G4. Chords: D (measures 2-3), Bm (measure 4), G (measure 5). Fingering: 1 (melody), 2-3-0 (guitar).
- System 2 (Measures 6-10):** Melody: quarter notes G4, A4, B4, G4. Chords: G (measures 6-7), A7 (measure 8), D (measure 9), A7 (measure 10), Bm (measure 11), G (measure 12). Fingering: 2-3-0 (guitar).
- System 3 (Measures 13-15):** Melody: quarter notes D4, E4, F#4, G4. Chords: D (measures 13-14), A7 (measure 15), Bm (measure 16), G (measure 17), A7 (measure 18). Fingering: 2-3-0 (guitar).
- System 4 (Measures 19-23):** Melody: quarter notes D4, E4, F#4, G4. Chords: D (measures 19-20), D (measure 21), D (measure 22), D (measure 23), G (measure 24). Fingering: 1-4-1-2 (melody), 2-3-0 (guitar).

Musical notation system 1 (measures 21-25). Chords: D, A, D, G, D. Includes guitar tablature and fingerings.

Musical notation system 2 (measures 26-30). Chords: G, D, A, Bm, G. Includes guitar tablature and fingerings.

Musical notation system 3 (measures 31-34). Chords: D, A7, D, D, D. Includes guitar tablature and fingerings.

Musical notation system 4 (measures 35-38). Chords: G, A7, D, D. Includes guitar tablature and fingerings.

# Sheebeg An Sheemore

This tune is said to be the first tune Carolan composed. After leaving Alderford at the age of 21, Carolan stopped at Squire Reynold's house at Lough Scur. Mr. Reynolds, who had been a harper and poet himself, was not apparently impressed by Carolan's musical abilities and asked him if he composed. When Carolan replied he did not, Squire Reynolds remarked he "might make a better hand of his tongue than of his fingers." Reynolds planned to leave a few days and suggested Carolan make a tune out of a local legend of a "battle between the kings of the gentry [fairies]." (O'Sullivan, Vol. 2, p. 123) Upon his return Carolan had composed this tune.

In an account of his visit to the area in 1828, Edward O'Reilly tells of two ranges of hills. On the highest part of one of the ranges "is one of those ancient conical heaps of stones and earth called motes or raths, so common in this country, and which the popular voices says are inhabited by the Daoine Maithe, the "Good People", which the country people dare not venture to call by the name of fairies. This mote, and the mountain on which it stands, are much celebrated in the popular poems and songs of Ireland under the name of Sigh Mor." (O'Reilly quoted in Sullivan, Vol. 2, p. 123) On the other range, near Squire Reynold's home was another mote, Sigh beg which was also reputed inhabited by fairies. According to local tales during the period in which Fionn Mac Cubhail and Fianna Eirionn were defeated, one of Fionn's heroes (perhaps Fionn himself), who was killed, was entombed in Sigh beg and a warrior of the other side was buried in Sigh mor. The battle of the two continued to be carried out by the immortals of Sig beg and Sig mor.

## Lyrics:

O'Sullivan gives specific lyrics in Gaelic only. He summarizes it stating that a battle took place between rival queens, first in words, each claiming to be superior. A battle followed, fought on the plain between Sheebeg and Sheemore, "the like of which has not been seen since Troy." (p. 124) A truce was finally called because of the approach of a fairy host from two neighboring hills.

This information is added courtesy of Rebecca Arkenberg, rjna@aol.com. According to Rebecca, "It's from Joseph O'Connell and LukeDoherty of Co. Roscommon, but originally appeared in accounts by Edward O'Reilly (the same as above) and Hardiman.

"Edward O'Reilly: The popular report of the country is that a great battle was fought between this hill and Sigh Mor at a very remote period, in which the celebrated Fionn MacCubhal and his Fianna Eirionn were defeated. One of Fionn's heroes, who was killed in the engagement, is said to lie entombed in Sighbeg, and a celebrated champion of the opposite party who was killed in the same battle had his remains deposited in the center of Sigh Mor. Some insist that it was over the body of Fionn himself that the mote on Sighbeg was erected...

George Reynolds had a gigantic effigy of Finn built from an immense pile of lime and stone over the carn, the supposed place of Finn's sepulchre.

Hardiman: This pile remained for several years, a conspicuous object of the surrounding country, but it was at length prostrated by a storm. It was afterwards rebuilt, but another storm laid it in ruins and so it has remained ever since. . .and the people of the country assert and firmly believe that the storms by which it was overthrown were raised by the "good people."

The carn on Shebeg has been excavated; it is 5 feet 6 inches long, 3 feet wide and 4 feet in height. It could only be entered by a person lying at full stretch. Two human skeletons, one male and one female, both facing towards the former royal seat of Tara, were found. One set of teeth believed to have been those of the woman were found to be in a perfect state of preservation.

I climbed up both Shebeg and Shemore and played the tune on my tin whistle across the valley between. It is really a lovely place and with the fog lying between the two hills you can almost see the ghostly armies rushing across the plain."