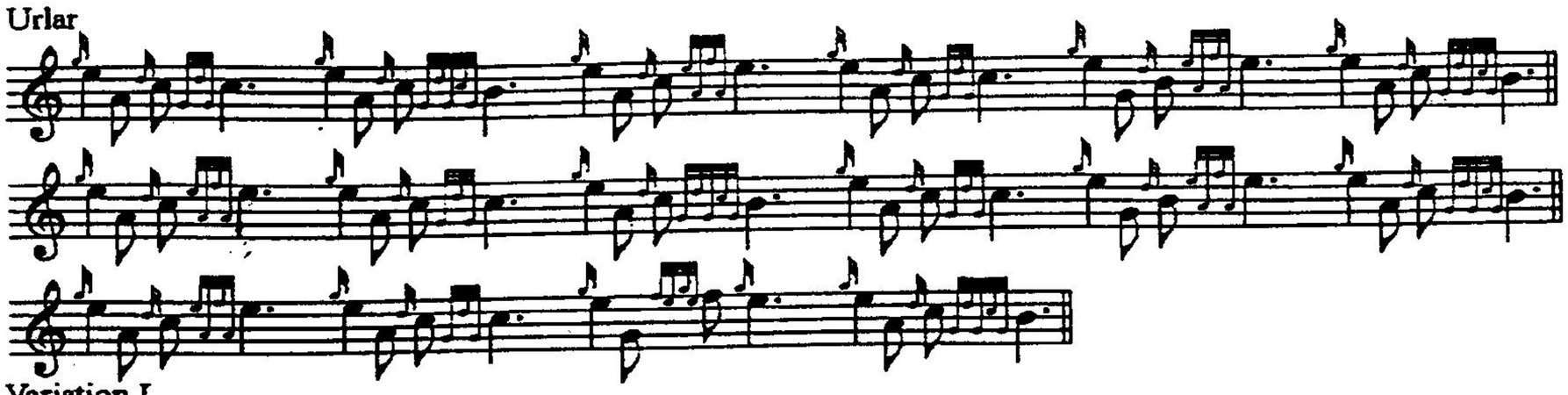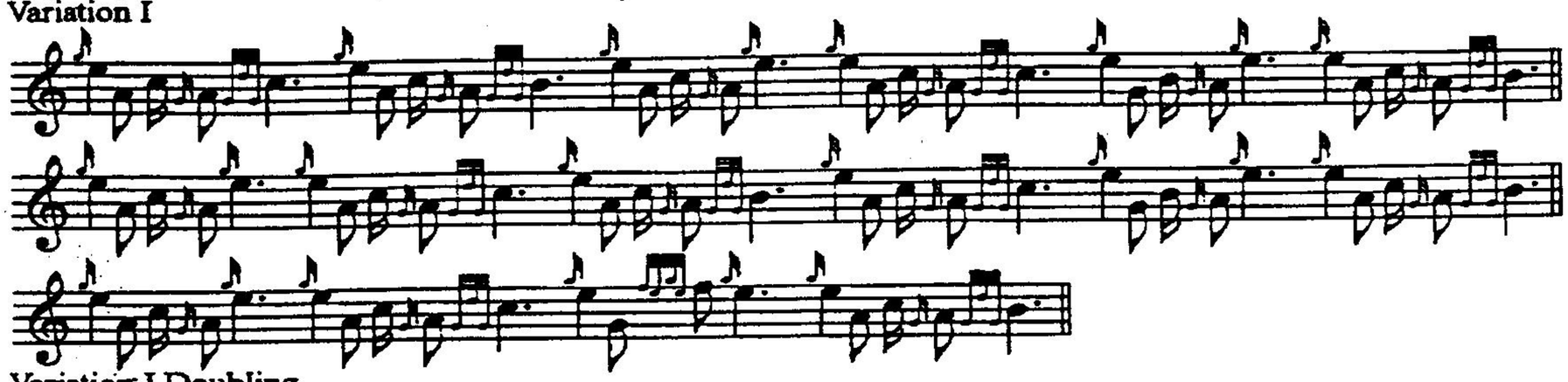THE GATHERING OF CLAN CHATTAN
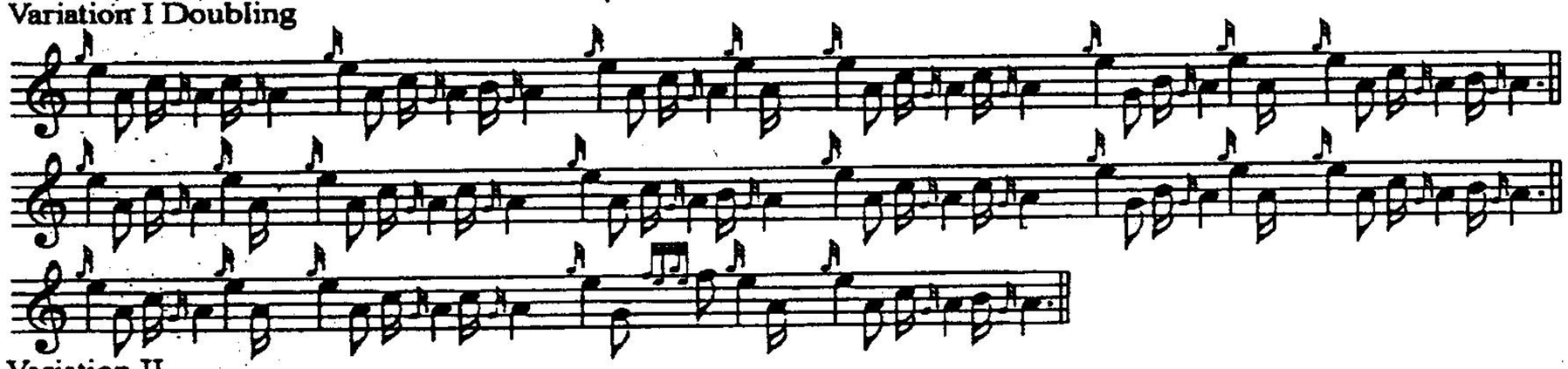
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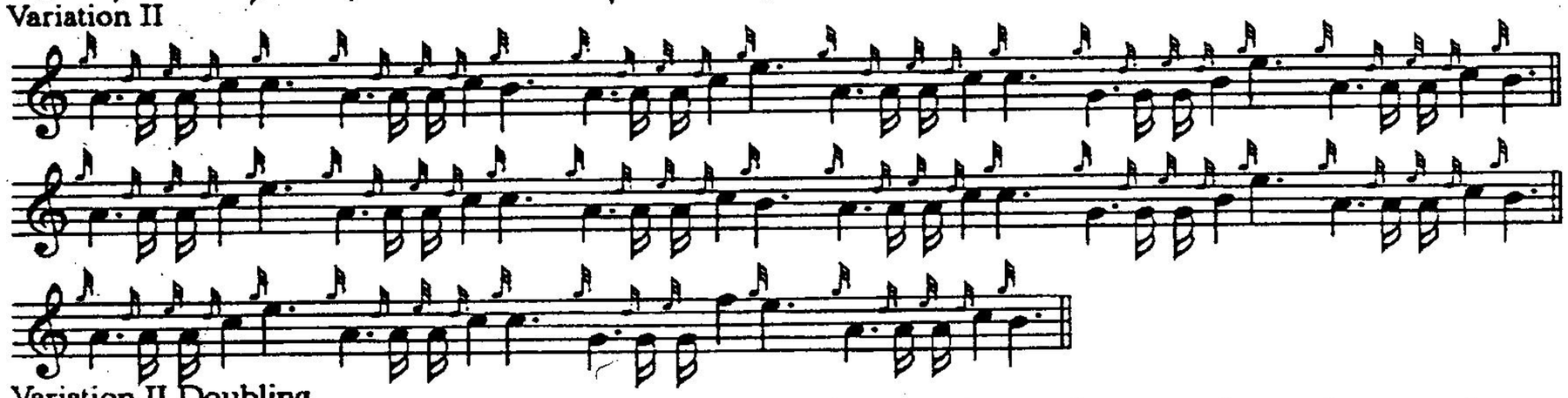


Variation I
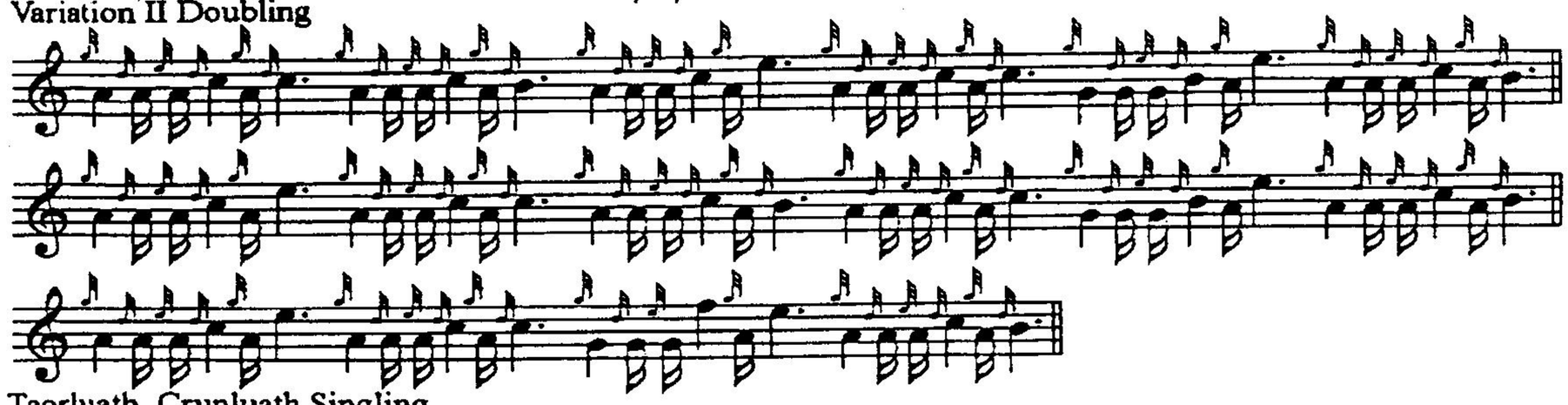


Variation I Doubling
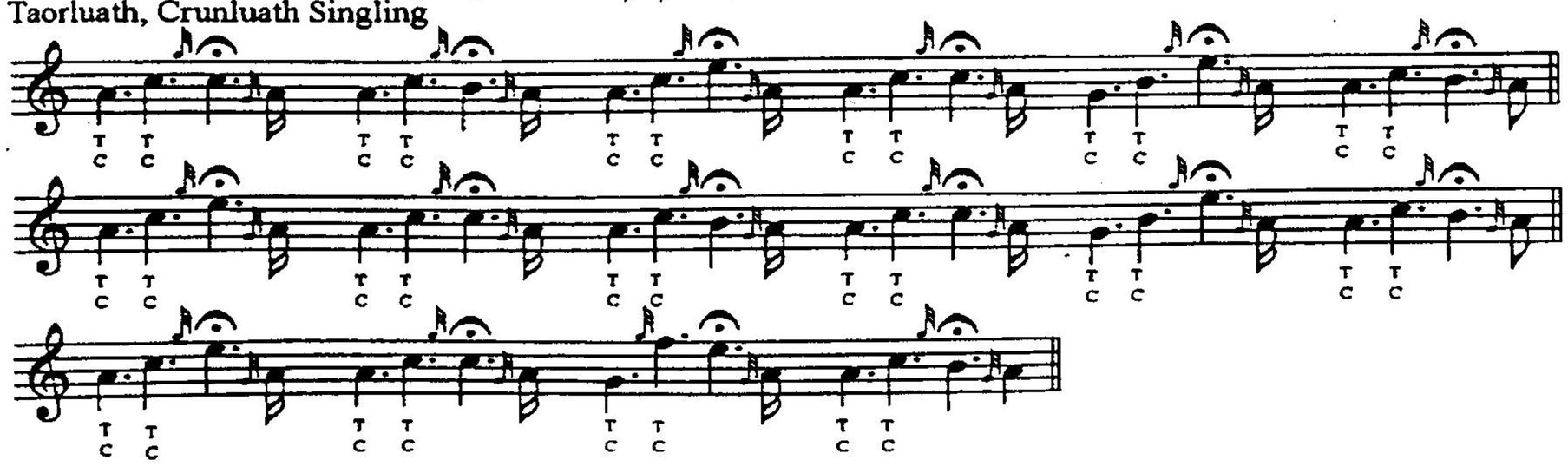


Variation II



Variation II Doubling



Taorluath, Crunluath Singling



MUSIC SET IN *FINALE* BY AMBER BLAIR



Belling the Cat

GETTING A HANDLE ON THE GATHERING OF CLAN CHATTAN

■ *by Jimmy McIntosh, MBE*

BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS, THE 2002 competition season will be well underway. It's encouraging to see several of our promising young up-and-coming pipers making plans to compete in Scotland this year, including Erin McCarthy, winner of the Nicol-Brown Chalice last Fall, who has been accepted to play in both the MacGregor Memorial and the Silver Medal, and Matt Pantaleoni, who earned a trip to play in the MacGregor Memorial competition at Oban with his victory at the Midatlantic Branch's Gilchrist Challenge Piobaireachd competition in February. I hope we will continue to see more of our young players demonstrate this sort of dedication.

Since my last article, I spent five weeks on vacation in Australia, and of course there was some piping included. I spent a week with Ian Young in North Queensland, and two days with his son, Sam, in Sydney. Both had studied with Brown and Nicol, so I was not surprised to find their Piobaireachd books were marked with all the Brown/Nicol alterations, many written in the hand of the Bobs. As we sang through the tunes, I saw all of the same annotations as I have in my own book. It was nice to confirm all the things I was taught, even from halfway around the world!

I also visited the Brisbane Piping Society with my friend, Ian Bruce, who closed the proceedings with "I Am Proud to Play a Pipe." His was an excellent performance, confirming my impression of Ian as one of the foremost Piobaireachd players/authorities in Australia at this time. The Brisbane Society is a monthly affair and the one I attended was the first of the season. I met some fellow Scots, including Sandy Campbell and Ron Fleming, composer of the lovely 6/8 March "Bengullion." Regretfully, none of the performers played it for him. I did spend some time going over tunes with Ian Bruce as well, and the tune I want to discuss in this issue is one he requested. (Incidentally, both Ian Young and Ian Bruce are subscribers to *the VOICE*.)

The tune is "The Gathering of Clan Chattan," an important McIntosh tune, as they were the chiefs of Clan Chattan. This is a strong 3/4 tune and is mainly played on the bottom hand. Last year, I heard a different timing to the Ground, alternating the value of the E's, but I am not familiar with this and much prefer what Brown and Nicol played and taught. In the Urlar, the dotted quarter note is the strong pulse after the two medium pulses. Don't play the Urlar too slowly—it is not a Lament. In both the Urlar and Variation I, the E is strong—as in most Gathering tunes. Be careful you do not cut the second Low A in each group. It should be as I have written it. In the Variation Doubling, the sixteenth notes must be cut, thereby emphasizing the Low A quarter notes. The tempo is also lifted a little by the removal of the dot. In Variation II, you must be very positive in playing the last two notes in each group, making sure you do not pause on the third Low A or Low G.

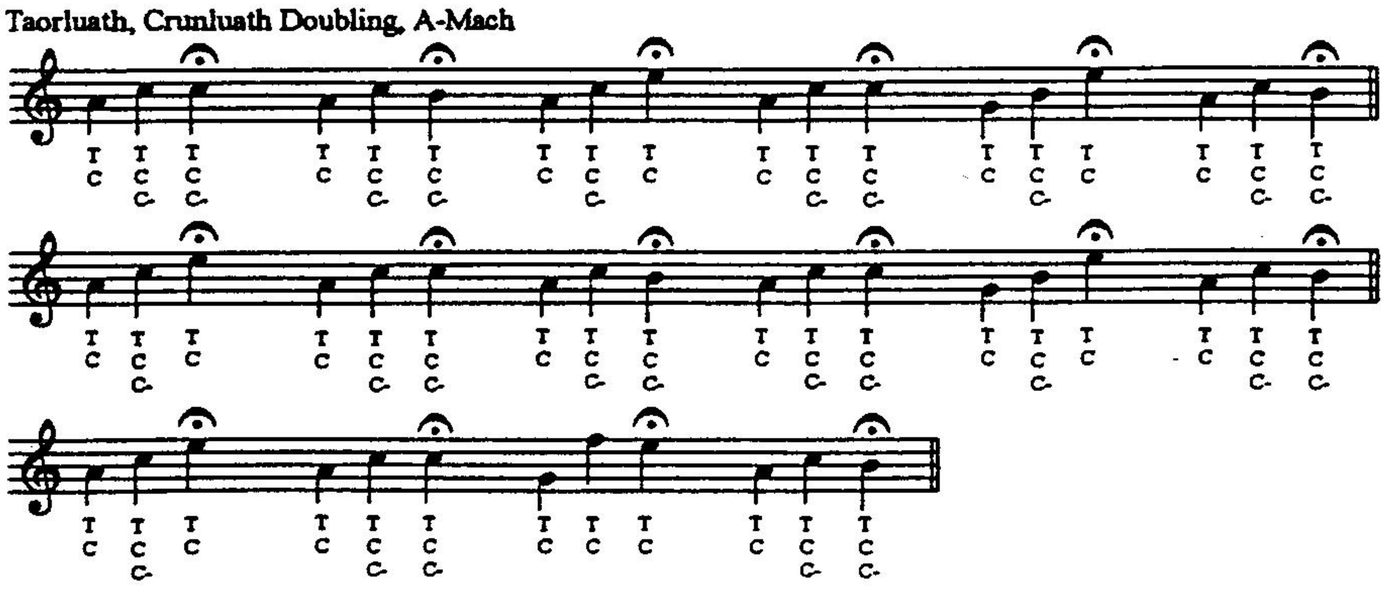
The Doubling—this is a dangerous one. You must pause on the D gracenoted quarter notes C or B, or you will finish up playing, "Here we go Looby-Loo, Here we go, Looby-Lie!" This is a very easy trap to fall into. The Taorluath and Crunluath Variations are strong 3/4 pulses as I have written them. Do not dwell on the second note of the cadences. A Crunluath-a-mach is required.

The history of the tune according to Fionn's *Historic, Biographic and Legendary Notes to the Tunes* follows:

> *A number of Clans in the north formed a confederation in 1609. With the exception of the Macleans of Dochgarroch, the component septs were all clearly descended from the same tribal stock. That being so, all the septs so confederated wore the same badge, and had the same war-cry—"Loch Moy," a loch near the seat of the Chief at Moyhall. The Macphersons of Badenoch never acted very cordially with the Mackintoshes, and so they have a Chief of their own in Cluny Macpherson, and a different war-cry. The following are the surnames admitted by the Clan Chattan—Cattanach, Clark, Crearer, Davidson, Farquharson, Gillespie, Gillies, Gow, Macbain, Macbean, Macgillivray, Mackintosh, Macphail, Macpherson, Macqueen, Noble, Shaw. The name* "Catan" *or* "Gille-Chatain" *means the servant of St. Catan, which denotes "little cat," and the crest, motto and armorial bearings of the Clan bear out that this was understood to be the meaning of the name.* ■

THE GATHERING OF CLAN CHATTAN (CONT.)

Taorluath, Crunluath Doubling, A-Mach



Sound files of Jimmy McIntosh teaching the tunes from his articles are available on the Audio Page of *the VOICE Online* at:

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