

The Dancing Master

"The Dancing Master", in Gaelic "*An Muinteoir-Rince*" or "*An Maigistir-Rinne*" is an Irish double jig in 6/8 time and A Dorian. The parts are played AABB.

This tune is an 'A' Dorian setting of the familiar "Swallowtail Jig".

Francis O'Neill thought it "a particularly good dancing jig" but did not remember his source for it. Paul de Grae records: "Ryan's setting [in Ryan's Mammoth Collection, 1883], which is almost identical [to O'Neill's] but in a lower key, is called "Swallow-Tail". If O'Neill did indeed borrow Ryan's tune there is a possible pun clue in the title, a "swallowtail" coat being the traditional dress of the old dancing masters".

According to Brendan Breathnach, itinerant dancing masters in Ireland held territories or districts of ten miles or so in which they plied their trade and had friendly rivalries with neighboring dancing masters. When they met at fairs or sporting events they would vie with each other by dancing in public and the honor of the moment. Often the outcomes of these contests were moot, however, "occasionally the event demanded a victor as when a Kerry dancing master vanquished a Cork dancing master in a contest as to who should 'own' Clonmel".

The tune was printed in Krassen's **O'Neill's Music of Ireland** (1976), O'Neill's **Music of Ireland: 1850 Melodies** (1903) and **Dance Music of Ireland: 1001 Gems** (1907) and Ryan's **Mammoth Collection** (1883).

It was recorded by Josephine Marsh on **Josephine Marsh** (1996).