

The Fairy Dance

The musical score for "The Fairy Dance" is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of five staves of music. The first staff begins with a boxed letter 'A' above a D chord. The second staff has chords A7, D, D, G, A7, D, G. The third staff has chords A7, D, a boxed letter 'B' above a D chord, G, and A7. The fourth staff has chords D, G, A7, D, D, G, A7. The fifth staff has chords D, G, and a first ending (1.) with chords A7, D, followed by a second ending (2.) with chords A7, D. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

"The Fairy Dance", in Gaelic "*Rinnce Na Sideoga/Sideog*" is also known as "Fisher Laddie", "The Haymaker", "La Ronde des Vieux", "Largo's Fairy Dance", "The Merry Dance" (New England), "Old Molly Hare" (Old-Time) or "Rustic Dance" is a reel known in Ireland, England, Scotland, Shetlands, America and Canada in D Major (most versions): G Major (Merryweather): A Major (O'Neill/1001).

This tune is often now considered a "beginning tune" for fiddlers, and though simple it seems to have retained its popularity through the years. It was one of 197 compositions claimed and published (in **Fifth Collection**, 1809) by Nathaniel Gow (1763-1831) under the title "Largo's Fairy Dance", which dates it to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century.

An early printing also appears in W.M. Cahusac's **Annual Collection of 24 Country Dances for 1809**, the same year Gow published his original.

In Ireland, "The Fairy Dance" was learned by collector P.W. Joyce when in his boyhood in County Limerick, c. 1840 in the south of Ireland. He (in *Irish Folk Music and Songs*, 1909) says a County Donegal (north Ireland) setting of this will be found in the **Journal of the Irish Folk Song Society**. O'Neill (1913) records that a special dance was performed to the tune in Ireland. A Pennsylvania collected version appears in Bayard (1981) as "Rustic Dance" and, as "*La Ronde des Vieux*" it was recorded in the latter 1920's by French-Canadian fiddler Willie Ringuette. The Shetland "Faery Reel" is a distanced version of "Fairy Dance", similar primarily in the second strain. An adaptation for the blackface minstrel stage can be found in James Buckley's **New Banjo Method** (1860), set by his brother G. Swaine Buckley (1829-1879), who was the lead banjo player for the troupe Buckley's Serenaders.

It was printed in Ashman's **Ironbridge Hornpipe** (1991), Bain's **50 Fiddle Solos** (1989), Brody's **Fiddler's Fakebook** (1983), Buckley's **Buckley's New Banjo Method** (1860), Cahusac's **Annual Collection of Twenty Four Country Dances for the Year 1809** (1809), Donnellan's **Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society**, vol. 2, no. 2 (1909), Ford's **Traditional Music of America** (1940), Galwey's **Old Irish Croonauns** (1910), Honeyman's **Secrets of the Gaelic Harp** (1898), Joyce's **Old Irish Folk Music and Songs** (1909), Kerr's **Merry Melodies**, vol. 1 (1880's), Martin's **Taigh na Teud** (1990), Cole's **1000 Fiddle Tunes** (1940), Martin & Hughes's **Ho-ro-gheallaidh**, vol. 1 (1990), Merryweather's **Tunes for English Bagpipes** (1989), J. Kenyon Lees' **Balmoral Reel Book** (1910), O'Neill's **Dance Music of Ireland: 1001 Gems** (1907), Raven's **English Country Dance Tunes** (1984), Roche's **Collection of Traditional Irish Music**, vol. 3 (1927), Skinner's **Harp and Claymore** (1903), Stewart-Robertson's **The Athole Collection** (1884) and others.

It has been recorded by various people but I haven't heard any of the recordings.