

Medieval Dance Suite (1994)

John Biggs

“Medieval Dance Suite was a natural outgrowth of the composer's involvement with the music of that period, and is indeed comprised of music that his ensemble performed on early instruments such as the rauschpfeife, krumhorn, recorder and hurdy-gurdy. It was Walter Verdehr who suggested to the composer that he might consider drawing from this fascinating source for this particular piece.

Cleverly couched in the ambiance of twentieth-century harmony, yet keeping their own medieval character, the seven dances are woven into a one-movement tapestry. All are from eleventh-, twelfth- and thirteenth-century anonymous composers and were chosen for their diverse and distinct character. They are, in order:

<i>Stantipes Imperfecta</i>	England
<i>Alle, psallite</i>	France
<i>BasseDanse</i>	France
<i>Istampita</i>	Italy
<i>Estampie</i>	England
<i>Dance Royale</i>	England
<i>Salterello</i>	Italy.”

—John Biggs

The world premiere of *Medieval Dance Suite* was on July 6, 1994 in the Verdehr Trio Summer Chamber Music Concert Series at the Wharton Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

John Biggs (born 1932, Los Angeles, California) received his master’s degree in composition from the University of California at Los Angeles, doing further study at the University of Southern California and the Royal Flemish Conservatory in Antwerp, Belgium. His teachers include Roy Harris, Lukas Foss, Ingolf Dahl, Flor Peeters, Halsey Stevens, and Leonard Stein.

Biggs has amassed a catalog of works that includes fifty-two choral works, forty-two chamber works and twelve orchestral scores. He has won numerous awards and honors including a Rockefeller Grant, Fulbright Grant, Atwater-Kent Award, an ASCAP Serious Music Award every year since 1974, and a number of Meet the Composer grants from diverse parts of the United States.

Unlike many American composers, Biggs chooses to work independently from his home in Ventura, California. However, before devoting himself fulltime to composition, he taught at Los Angeles City College, the University of California, Los Angeles, and the University of California, Berkeley. He served as composer-in-residence to six colleges in Kansas under a grant from the Department of Health, Education & Welfare.

As a performer, he founded the John Biggs Consort, which toured internationally under Columbia Artists Management for twenty years, singing and playing music from the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and twentieth century.