

Full Bio

Roger Briggs was born in 1952 in Florence, Alabama. He began piano studies at age eight. By age 11 he was seriously composing and performing. At age 15, he was conducting, composing, and arranging for school, community productions, and for private performances. By the time he had graduated from high school, he had played in, conducted, and written for numerous ensembles including Concert Bands, Orchestras, Jazz Bands and Rock Bands. He was also a very active classical pianist-both solo and chamber.

In 1970 he attended the University of Memphis, where he studied composition with Don Freund, piano with Herbert Hermann, and conducting with Richard Earhart. There he earned a B.M in Music Composition, a B.M in Piano Performance, won the state concerto competition performing the Prokofiev 2nd Piano Concerto, and twice won the Johannes Smit Composition Award.

At age 22 he attended the Eastman School of Music where he studied composition with Samuel Adler, Joseph Schwantner, Eugene Kurtz, and Warren Benson. He studied conducting with Gustav Meier. There he earned an M.M. and a Ph.D in Music Composition and won both the Louis Lane Orchestral Award and the Bernard Sernofsky award for excellence in composition.

At age 26, (1978) he was appointed Professor of Composition and Conducting at Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN. There he founded the Michiana New Music Ensemble, and received his first national and international recognition as a composer with works such as the solo piano work, SPIRALS, the chamber orchestra work, GATHERING TOGETHER, and the chamber work, CHAMBER MUSIC.

At age 31 he did post-doctoral work at the Dartington Institute in Totnes, England where he studied composition and

contemporary conducting techniques with Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and John Carewe. During this period, he received several prestigious awards including three MacDowell Colony Fellowships, a National Endowment for Arts Composer Award, two Meet the Composer Grants, first place in both the Alienor Competition and the Illinois State University Fine Arts Competition, an ASCAP Award for Young Composers, a New York State Council of the Arts Grant, two Indiana State Arts Grants, a Dartington Fellowship, a Petit Jean International Art Song Fellowship, the Dreyfus/MacDowell Award, and he was the only honored American in the International Composers Forum hosted by the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble.

In 1989 he was appointed Professor of Composition and Piano at Western Washington University. He founded the Contemporary Chamber Players and was appointed conductor of the University Symphony and Opera Programs two years later. While there, he received a Logan Seminar Fellowship, the Washington State Composer of the Year Award, two Washington State Arts Commission Awards, the University's Excellence in Teaching Award, and the Mayor's Fine Arts Award.

He accepted the Artistic Director post with the Whatcom Symphony Orchestra in 1996. He immediately established the Whatcom Symphony Chamber Orchestra, and later founded the Music by American Composers Commissioning Series and the Chamber Music NOW! program. He has also helped establish an impressive orchestral/educational outreach program in the Bellingham area.

His compositions continue to receive international acclaim. In 2005 he received the prestigious Lieberson Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. His conducting career has also receive national and international attention as well. He has conducted and recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra, the Czech Radio Orchestra, the Prague Symphony Orchestra, and the South Bend Symphony.

Mr. Briggs remains Professor of Composition at Western Washington University where he serves as coordinator of the Composition Program. He remains the Artistic Director of the Whatcom Symphony Orchestra in Bellingham, WA.