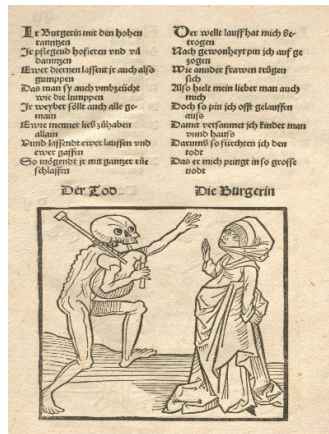


Why did Death dance in the Dance of Death?



Reading the language of the Dance.

Dancing was arguably the most popular and widespread communal activity during the Middle Ages, comparable with religious ceremony in the numbers of participants involved. At all ages and levels of society, from courts to commons, from infancy to old age, many people shared the experience of dance.

The universal understanding of this language was assumed and harnessed by the author of the allegory of the *Danse Macabre*, Paris



1424, in order to convey the doctrine of the *Ars moriendi* and the concept of an individual's unique relationship with God. This talk explores the language and imagery of dance, both in literature and as a form of choreographed procession, as a background for 'reading' the imagery of the Dance of Death.

The talk is accompanied by a Powerpoint presentation of the woodcut images of Guyot Marchant, Holbein and other medieval illustrations. Some of the musical instruments depicted in the Heidelberg version (c.1488) will be played.