

# Komusō

虚無僧

for solo clarinet

2009

Austin Shadduck



# Komusō

Completed September 27, 2009

Premiered October 6, 2009 by David Bridges, Bb clarinet  
LeFrak Concert Hall, Queens College, CUNY

## Program Notes

Komusō were mendicant priests prominent in Edo period Japan who played the shakuhachi, an end-blown flute, as a path to enlightenment. Their original meditation music, honkyoku, lacked definite rhythm and was instead based on phrases guided, like all Zen arts, by the breath. *Komusō* is a piece that brings a little of the honkyoku tradition to the clarinet. The music elaborates on patterns and figures typical of the shakuhachi literature while leaving much of the flow and interpretation up to the performer.

## Performance Notes

*Komusō* is a meditative piece composed with the sounds of shakuhachi honkyoku in mind. As such it is open to interpretation, although I recommend playing with limited to no vibrato and focusing on the breath, aiming for aesthetic quality and timbral variety of tone throughout. Notated rhythms are intended to be free and stemless note durations are even more so; a stemless note followed by a horizontal line is held at length while a regular stemless note is shorter in duration. Grace notes are written without or with a slash to indicate, respectively, performance on or before the free beat.

Legend:



*Nayashi* (also known as *furi* or *furikiri*) – a sudden drop in pitch that quickly returns to the original note; it usually occurs shortly after the note it is attached to and, in this composition, indicates a (roughly) half-step displacement achieved via jaw movement, half-holing, or a combination of the two



*Otoshi* – like a *nayashi* except the pitch is dropped at the end of the note to which it is attached; do not return to the original pitch

*Recordings and performance materials are available from the composer.*

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Free and expressive ♩ = 52 - 58

3 3 3 3 breath attack

*p* < *fp* > *n.* *p* *mf* *fp* > *n.* *p* < *fp* > *n.*

2 *mf* > *p* *mf* *mp* *fp* *f* *mp* *fp* > *n.* end note abruptly

3 *mf* *f* > *mf* *mp* *f* rit.

Slightly faster ♩ = 60 - 66

4 *mf* *fp* < *f* *mp* > *p* *pp*

5 *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* > *p* *fp*

6 *cresc.* breathe when necessary