

*Persimmon* (1992)

Gary Smart

*"Persimmon* was written in Japan in 1992 while I was teaching at Kobe College. The influence of Japanese traditional music on this piece is, I think, very apparent. The persimmon in Japanese culture is a symbol of autumn, the closing of a cycle, and also of looking back philosophically.

At times, the violin invokes the spirit of the *shamisen*, and the piano the *koto*. Most important, the clarinet is asked to become—especially in the lingering coda—a player of that almost metaphysical Japanese instrument, the *shakuhachi*.

Takashi Atoda's wonderful story, *The Square Persimmon*, served as an inspiration for my work. Atoda's 'persimmon' is nostalgic, autumnal, and it features a ghostly mix of things modern and ancient."

—Gary Smart

The world premiere of *Persimmon* was on January 17, 1994 in the Heritage Center Concert Hall, Alma College, Alma, Michigan.

Gary Smart (born 1943) has maintained a wide-ranging career as composer, classical and jazz pianist, and teacher. He received his Bachelor of Music in piano and his Master of Music in composition and piano at Indiana University. Further study ensued at the Hochschule für Music in Köhn, Germany and at Yale University where he received a DMA in 1979.

Smart has received a Leonard Bernstein Fellowship at the Berkshire Music Center, a Horatio Parker Memorial Fellowship at Yale University, and a study grant from the German National Academic Foundation. His work has been supported by awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Fulbright program, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Contemporary Music Project of the Ford Foundation, the Music Educators National Conference, and the Music Teacher's National Association.

Smart composes and improvises a music that reflects an abiding interest in Americana, jazz, world musics, and the Western classical tradition. His *Concordia*, winner of the first annual Concordia Competition for jazz-influenced orchestral music, was premiered at Lincoln Center in 1988. The solo marimba suite, *The Seasons*, was the winner of the Percussive Arts Society Composer's Contest in 1992, and *Song of the Holy Ground*, a work for string quartet and piano, was the winning composition in the John Donald Robb Musical Trust Composers' Composition in 2009 Smart has also received a John Day Jackson Composition Prize from Yale University and a composition prize from the Young Musicians Foundation of Los Angeles.

Smart's music has been performed in major venues in the United States, Europe, and Asia. It is published by Margun Music and recorded on the Mastersound, Capstone, and Albany labels.

Smart has taught at the University of Wyoming, spent two residencies in Japan teaching in programs at Osaka University and Kobe College, and taught in Indonesia as Distinguished Lecturer in Jazz. He is a Terry Presidential Professor of Music at the University of North Florida, and for a number of years, served as Chairman of the Music Department and Dean of the College of Fine Arts.