

Hamadryad for alto flute, viola and guitar (2001)

Commissioned by the Chicago based New Opus Trio, and first performed by them at the Center for New Music, University of Iowa. The inclusion of the guitar - rather than the more customary harp - with its restricted range and dynamic force, coloured my whole approach to the composition of this piece. I decided to bring all three instruments into its orbit: the use of an alto flute, instead of the more brilliant ordinary flute, in turn biased the whole conception towards a rather shadowy texture. (The French word for viola is 'alto'). Its sultry tones, like the warm dusky tones of the viola, are wonderfully compatible with the guitar.

Hamadryad is the name the Greeks gave to those wood-nymphs who were said to die with the tree in which they dwelt. It is also the name of a large Indian snake - naja hamadryas - likewise a tree-dweller. In my piece, it is the arcadian image which predominates.

Jeremy Dale Roberts