In Aeternam for Orchestra (2000)

Instrumentation: 2 + picc., 2 + eng. hn., 2 + bass cl., 2 + c. bsn.// 4 3 3 1 timp., 3 perc. // harp, piano, cel // strings
Duration: 14 minutes
Commissioned by the California Symphony. Premiered by the California Symphony under the direction of Barry Jekowsky on May 7 and 9, 2000. Also performed by the London Symphony Orchestra, Barbican Centre, London, England, October, 2001 and the Budapest Symphony, Budapest, Hungary, May, 2001. (Published by Theodore Presser Co.)

Premiered on May 7, 2000 at the Dean Lesher Regional Center for the Arts by the California Symphony, conducted by Barry Jekowsky. The work has also been performed by many orchestras, including the London Symphony, the Seattle Symphony, the National Symphony, the Budapest Symphony, the Rhode Island Philharmonic, the San Antonio Symphony, the Santa Rosa Symphony, and was chosen as winner of the BBC's International Masterprize Competition in 2001 in London, England.

This work was written as a memorial to my niece who died at birth. In it, my aim was to capture a range of emotions, from sorrow and grief to shock and despair. But it is also about life. The memory of hearing my own son's heartbeat for the first time was still fresh in my mind and there is a heartbeat figure which appears in the second section of the work, played pizzicato by the basses and cellos very softly, then later very forcefully. The title is in Latin and means In Eternity.

Though in one continuous movement, this work contains three main sections. The first section, which is slow and lyrical in character, introduces a short thematic fragment played by the piccolo. This thematic idea is heard throughout the course of the work in different contexts. The second section, which is fast, frantic, and somewhat violent in character, transforms the opening fragment, first in the bass clarinet and woodwinds, then later in the brass. The third section brings back material from the first and the work concludes the way it began.

-- Pierre Jalbert