

Jay Alan Yim

neverthesamerivertwice

(2010)

commissioned by Alan Gilbert and the New York Philharmonic

FP: 17 & 18 December 2010, NYP, Alan Gilbert, Eric Huebner, piano

for Marlana, in celebration of her unswerving love and support during the past twenty years

For this commission, I wanted to create a work where piano and orchestra are cast as 21st century partners in a shared enterprise, rather than dramatically opposed adversaries.

As in several compositions that precede **neverthesamerivertwice**, I've approached the keyboard as a monodic (rather than contrapuntal or chordal) instrument. This tactic puts the piano on a more equal footing with the linearity of other orchestral instruments, and evokes correspondences with the tradition of toccatas and the continuo in Baroque concerti.

Structurally, the piano has a vertebral role. It is the backbone of the work: the source of all orchestral figuration, the *primus inter pares*, or pivotal character in the ensemble, around which every other constellation coalesces and then dissolves. Although its presence is constantly projected by a steady stream of notes, there is only one bar where it is completely unaccompanied. Counterbalancing the single-mindedness of this role, I wanted the orchestration to be relentlessly kaleidoscopic, with a different timbral profile in every measure. As a result, the piano is not so much soloist as collaborator-in-chief (what Malcolm Gladwell refers to as a 'connector').

The title refers to Heraclitus' well-known aphorism about the paradoxical impossibility of stepping into the same river twice. Early on, I had an image of a pianistic river flowing through varied orchestral terrain. My work isn't a literal depiction of any single watercourse, but more of a hydrogeological archetype traced in reverse, from braided delta through forest and canyon to glacial source.