

THE *IMBER* PROJECT

Gerard McBurney *How did the Imber project come about? What intrigued you about it? What – most importantly – have been the musical difficulties and challenges posed?*

Giya Kancheli The idea of Imber belongs to Michael Morris [co-director of Artangel]. I accepted his proposal, first based on his description and my trust in his sensibility, and later after having visited Imber for the first time in 2001. However, since intuitive thinking plays a significant role for me, I started subconsciously thinking about the project even before I went to Imber. The first visit helped me fully understand the nature of the ‘problem.’ I find it difficult to describe my emotional field in concrete terms. In the last few years, the world has had (and continues to have) so many important cataclysms that undoubtedly must have marked the character of my music. Possibly it became sadder than my previous work. But the presence of a certain irony in it, I think, is a sign of hope.

GM *What have been your experiences of site-specific music in the past? In the past, how has your music been affected by writing for specific places and specific acoustics?*

GK I have never worked on this kind of ‘site-specific’ project before. The *Imber* project combines incidental music, played under the open sky, and a new piece that will be performed in St Giles’ Church (Imber). I had to keep in mind the size and acoustic qualities of the Church when I was composing.

GM *What did you notice about the landscape of Imber and Salisbury Plain? How did what you saw when you went there affect you? How did it differ from what you thought you might see before you went there?*

GK I was struck by that very special silence and deceptive sense of calmness that takes on a rather mystical nature in these kinds of places. When you realise where you really are, you can’t help imagining what might interrupt this silence. If I were to compare it to a similar place in Georgia that I know very well, (David Gareji - fortunately no longer used as a training ground), the atmosphere in Imber, in the absence of the Army, seemed rather idyllic. Sometimes, I even thought that a fat cow would appear any minute and offer me a glass of milk.

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