

## INFLUENCES AND INSPIRATION

**Gerard McBurney** *You have spoken before in interview about your early encounters with various kinds of Western music and especially with jazz and big-band music from America. I remember you mentioning Stan Kenton, for example. What was the earliest music of this kind that you heard and what appealed to you about it? What does this music mean to you now?*

**Giya Kancheli** My love affair with music started not with Bach and Schubert, but with Glenn Miller and Duke Ellington. This began with the so-called 'trophy' films I saw after the war, particularly one with a simple story line but a fantastic film score performed by the main 'character' — the Glenn Miller orchestra. I fell inadvertently and forever in love with jazz. And that's when my most treasured dream was born -- to study music so that I could have my own big band. My life unfolded differently, but my love of jazz remained forever. When I was young, it was music by Ellington, Erroll Garner and Oscar Peterson. Later I was swept away by collaborations between Gil Evans and Miles Davis. And in general, I think the foundations of the Soviet totalitarian regime were shaken by Swing long before the dissident movement.

**GM** *There are striking moments in your work where we hear sudden echoes of other worlds. In your symphonies, the most unlikely ghosts can raise their heads above the parapet for a fleeting moment and then disappear... Beethoven, Verdi, ancient polyphony, military marches... I remember once standing beside you during a performance of Life without Christmas and you turned to me and whispered: "Rimsky-Korsakov's harmony!" What thoughts do you have about how composers now should approach playing with such volatile memories of the past? Polystylists and post-modernists often seem to ask us specifically to spot the references, but your music seems far more interested in the unstated and undeclared effect of what we half-recognise. What is it that you find so interesting about playing with the past?*

**GK** I never tried to follow or contradict any stylistic movements. Of course, everyone who is starting to write music has to face a set of traditions -- centuries-old and modern. I feel equally close to the music of pre-Bach period and 20th Century, although I must admit that I don't trust people who are equally open to music of all times and all styles. As exciting as I find technological progress, which also brings ease to composers, I still prefer the old-fashioned tools of the trade -- a pencil, an eraser and a ruler. Maybe this is connected to my recurrent nostalgia for the past century -- for the time when horse drawn carriages travelled side-by-side with the first cars.