

Glenn Gould:

Glenn Gould was born in Toronto on the 25th September 1932 into a musical family. His mother was his only teacher until he was ten. When he was three years old, it became evident that he possessed exceptional musical talent, including perfect pitch and the ability to read music. At five, he began to compose, and played his own compositions for family and friends.

Even as a child, Gould was isolated due to his extreme love for music and his incredible working drive. At the age of ten, he began studying in the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto and two years later was to win the annual Kiwanis Music Festival piano trophy. He was never to compete again, as he became very opposed to the idea of competitions. Many artists influenced Gould's future playing, but in particular Artur Schnabel, Rosalyn Tureck's recordings of Bach, which he described as "upright, with a sense of repose and positiveness," and Leopold Stokowski about whom he would later write a book.

Gould's first public performance was in 1945 on the organ, a concert which was reviewed under the headline "Boy, age 12, Shows Genius As Organist." This was the first of many performances including Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto with various orchestra's of which he said not much preparation was needed due to his perfect knowledge of Schnabel's recording. Gould's long term relationship with broadcasting and recording begun when he gave his first network radio recital for the CBC in 1950. Five years later he was to give his Debut in New York City and the next day was to sign a long lasting contract with Columbia Masterworks.

Of all his work, Gould's Bach playing and in particular his Goldberg Variations are probably the most renowned. His first recording of Bach's Goldberg Variations took place in 1955 and instantly became a best seller. Gould went on to make over sixty recordings with Columbia Masterworks.

In 1957 Gould toured Europe for the first time, beginning with two weeks in the Soviet Union. He thus became the first Canadian or American to perform in the Soviet Union in the midst of the Cold War to enthusiastic Soviet audiences and critics. Also during his European tour, Gould performed Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic and Herbert von Karajan, and the two artists thereafter remained loyal admirers of each other's work. In 1960 Gould made his first appearance on American television with Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic.

Gould chose for himself a quiet isolated and solitary existence as he realised that he did not enjoy the concert life in the least. He felt that musically he could give much more in a recording studio than a concert hall, and thus gave his last public performance as a concert pianist on the 10th of April 1964 in a Los Angeles recital. He realised that the hectic concert life was too much for him and that he wanted to focus on his other interests among which were writing, broadcasting, composing, conducting and experimenting with technology.

In principal, Gould was opposed to recording the same works twice but he departed from this custom with a second recording of the Goldberg Variations.

A few months before his death, Glenn Gould formed a chamber orchestra in Toronto consisting of some members of The Toronto Symphony with himself as conductor. He was particularly proud of their recording together of Wagner's Siegfried Idyll, a work that had long been special to him and which he transcribed for piano and recorded.

Glenn Gould knew what he wanted to accomplish and how he wanted to live his life, and in both he succeeded completely. What some have considered strange was in fact, only different. Even though he chose to be a spectator rather than a participant in the affairs of the world, he never ceased to have a child-like, wide-eyed interest in all that was going on around him. He was a solitary man, but he touched and uplifted the lives of many.