

GLENN GOULD AND THE CBC

By Karen Kieser

Naming the major radio performance studio in the Canadian Broadcasting Centre after Glenn Gould is a living testament into the future of this great Canadian's intense and creative relationship with the CBC. From the earliest years of his career, Glenn Gould was fascinated with the possibilities afforded by radio, tape and the recording studio. From his CBC Radio broadcast debut on Christmas Eve, 1950, through the intricate radio documentaries of the 1960s and 1970s, the CBC studios were a playground for his powers of invention. Throughout almost a decade of international touring and public performances (1955-64), Gould regularly played studio recitals, appeared with the CBC's radio orchestras, and gave on-air interviews and talks on musical subjects.

Gould's exit from the concert stage in 1964 released his full energy into the electronic media. Alongside his highly productive commercial recording partnership with CBS Records of New York (now Sony Classical), he continued to appear on CBC Radio and Television, as well as collaborating with BBC, PBS and Radio France. The results included discussions of such subjects as the possibilities of the recording studio, the obsolescence of the concert hall, the nature of improvisation, contrapuntal analysis, and aleatoric or "chance" music, as Gould gradually emerged as a significant musical theorist and philosopher. And then there were all those glorious performances: Bach of course, but also Beethoven, Webern, Hindemith, Anhalt, Mozart, Morawetz, Richard Strauss, Scarlatti, Scriabin, Gibbons, Byrd, Schoenberg, Brahms, Hétu, Bizet, Pentland, Grieg and many more. Many of these productions were also enriched by Gouldian analysis and dialectic.

But it was the radio documentaries that most demonstrated Gould's extraordinary appetite for auditory challenge and formal experiment. Produced between 1962 and 1979, even today they stretch the listener's ears and mind with their multiple, simultaneous strands of information, woven together in contrapuntal textures. Their subject matter, too, reflects their creator's interests. In addition to portraits of such musical luminaries as Arnold Schoenberg, Pablo Casals, Leopold Stokowski and Richard Strauss, the famous *Solitude Trilogy* explores aspects of Canadian psychography: *The Idea of North*, *The Latecomers* (on Newfoundland) and *The Quiet in the Land* (on the Mennonites).

For Gould, the attraction of the radio documentary and the recording studio was the opportunity for complete control. Whether scripting both sides of an interview, painstakingly editing between multiple musical takes or rebalancing dynamics at the mixing console, he revelled in his precise personal determination of the finished product. Glenn's presence was a frequent (if unpredictable) delight in the Radio Music Department on the fourth floor of the old Radio Building at 354 Jarvis Street. Here was his chance to enjoy contact with people who, like him, loved both music and radio. His work day began as others' ended. This was the hour when he might appear at one's office door, invariably clad in cap, scarf and tweed overcoat, whatever the season. Whether the topic was the joys of Grieg or the dissolute nature of Debussy's music, the resulting conversation never failed to be stimulating and memorable.

Glenn Gould's premature death at the age of 50 on October 4, 1982 was a tremendous shock to Canadians and to music-lovers everywhere. It was felt especially keenly at CBC, where his art and his lifeforce were so immediate and vital. We are deeply proud to celebrate Gould's stature as an artist, and his close connection with the Corporation, by bestowing his name on a broadcast studio with the most advanced technological capacity. May the performances and broadcasts realized here live up to Glenn Gould's inexhaustible quest for high standards and new frontiers.

Karen Kieser spent ten years as deputy head and area head of CBC Radio Music, and was General Manager of Glenn Gould Studio between October, 1992 and March, 1994.