



**THE GLENN GOULD FOUNDATION**

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**GLENN GOULD**

**Personal**

- Born September 25, 1932 in Toronto, Canada
- Full name Glenn Herbert Gould
- Died October 4, 1982 in Toronto, Canada
- Buried Mount Pleasant Cemetery Toronto, Canada

**Education**

- Learned rudiments of music and the piano from his mother
- Studied theory 1940-7, organ 1942-9, and piano 1943-52 at the Toronto (later Royal) Conservatory of Music
- Earning Associate diploma with highest honors at age 12

**Career Highlights**

- Concert Pianist 1947-1964
- String Quartet composition 1953-1955
- Director of Music, Stratford Festival 1961-1964
- Abandoned concert stage in 1964 and become classical music's first full-time recording artist
- Seven major contrapuntal radio documentaries 1967-1979
- Feature film musical arrangement 1972, 1982
- Bach recordings featured on the "Golden Recording", a symbol of the best of human civilization sent by NASA aboard Voyager I and II spacecrafts 1977

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### **Ideas and Significance**

- Believed that the performer's role was properly creative and actively engaged with the score, not simply a passive conduit
- Offered original, deeply personal, sometimes shocking interpretations (extreme tempos, odd dynamics and phrasing) that have always been controversial, particularly in well-known works by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms
- Reigns unchallenged as the top-selling solo classical instrumentalists in the history of recording, with the best-selling solo classical instrumental album of all time
- Writings, theorizing on transformative impact of technology on music, the arts and society - often compared to (Marshall) McLuhan in scope of ideas and influence
- Implacably opposed to competition in all its forms
- Along with Bernstein, Gould gave a new, "hip" contemporary face to classical music
- Revolutionized radio with pioneering experiments with words and music – a trail-blazing media artist

### **Quirks and Controversies**

- Gould's unusual performing mannerisms, such as humming while he played, were the subject of much discussion, but admirers were able to focus on the underlying musicality and intensely spiritual vision in his finest performances
- He upset many conventions of piano playing his fondness for detached articulation, but he was widely admired for his virtuosity, probing intellect, command of musical architecture, rhythmic dynamism, precise fingerwork and clarity of counterpoint
- Gould once wrote an extended magazine article in which he interviewed himself about himself
- A celebrated maverick, Gould espoused many controversial ideas (e.g., low regard for Mozart, whom he said died too late, rather than too early)
- Became known for his reclusive lifestyle, which established him as a romantic figure for many admirers around the world

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## Popular Culture

- Dr. Hannibal Lecter, featured in *The Silence of the Lambs* apparently had a fondness for Gould's performance of *The Goldberg Variations*
- The head of one of France's most respected wine-making dynasties is such an admirer that he named his yachts Glenn I, Glenn II and Glenn III
- The late rock singer-songwriter Warren Zevon once stated he'd rather visit Gould's grave at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery in Toronto than visit Elvis Presley's grave
- Tom Waits once hinted that the title of his album *Mule Variations* was a sly tribute to Gould's *Goldberg Variations*
- Gould has a strange way of turning up in popular media: listen for him in *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, and look for his face in a scene between Robert DeNiro and Sylvester Stallone in the film *Copland*
- The late Academy Award winning director and playwright Anthony Minghella said he kept the photos of his two artistic muses above his writing desk - Samuel Becket and Glenn Gould
- Herbert von Karajan, legendary conductor of The Berlin Philharmonic, was such an admirer that he was prepared to switch record labels to record with Gould
- Gould was the first North American classical artist to tour the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War, causing such a sensation that he is still a legendary figure in Russia today
- A self proclaimed Puritan, Gould was non the less the subject of a week long film festival in 2007, at Berlin's 1920s Babylon Theatre, a temple of Weimar-era decadence
- In 2008, Gould was the subject of a 16-page feature article in *Esquire Japan*
- Inspiration for and subject of countless novels, plays, musical compositions and arrangements, poems, visual art, films and conferences, he continues to make headlines 27 years after his death