



THE GLENN GOULD MONTHLY

April 2009



Polish-Born Pianist Releases A Tribute to Glenn Gould

By Penny Johnson, GGF contributing author

March 23, 2009

Our readers may recall that in October of last year, we posted an article about a recital given as part of the "Dead Pianist Society" at Hudson Valley Piano Club just north of New York City. Titled, A Tribute to Glenn Gould, the recital was given by Polish pianist, Magdalena Baczewska in preparation for the production of her recording by the same title. Newly released on the Holophon label (884501092111), the recording features exceptional performances of the two bookends in Gould's recording career: the Goldberg Variations of J. S. Bach, and the Sonata Op. 5 in B-minor of R. Strauss. Recorded at Patrych Sound Studios in June of 2008, the recording is available on iTunes.

Baczewska, a graduate of the doctoral program at Manhattan School of Music, first heard Gould play at the age of seven. "Glenn Gould has always been one of my greatest teachers," remarked Baczewska in an interview over the phone. "So much teaching today is about making sound, however Gould was an intellectual and that made me pay attention." Curiously enough, Baczewska admits that if she could have dinner with any musician, she would pick Gould. "I would ask him what ritual he would eliminate from his daily life to make life easier. I suspect that his answer would be 'eating'." She adds that, "should I have had a chance to take Gould to any place here in New York City, it would definitely be one of the flea markets [laughs]."

Currently the Artist Relations Coordinator for Yamaha Artist Services, Inc., in New York City, Baczewska also teaches private piano lessons. In addition to her talent as a pianist, she also plays harpsichord and is particularly fond of Renaissance music. "Orlando Gibbons was Gould's favourite composer, and his recordings of the great Renaissance master really opened me up to the beauties of modal music."

The following is a reproduction of the liner notes to Ms. Baczewska's recording. For more information, please visit www.madalenaBaczewska.com or magdalena.lpoint618.com.

Liner notes by Magdalena Baczewska:

"Dear listeners,

To be honest, I don't know where to start discussing Bach, Strauss, or Gould. It would be unfair to try to contain these three giants of music history on one page or reduce their achievements and gifts to a small summation. The recording you are about to hear represents 'book ends' of Glenn Gould's output as a recording artist. His illustrious recording career began with now legendary performance of Bach's Goldberg Variations in 1955. The Strauss Sonata was the final work recorded before Gould's untimely death in 1982. In my tribute to this extraordinary musician and thinker, I take the liberty of juxtaposing the sublime Variations with a juvenile work of eighteen-year-old Richard Strauss (who called himself 'first-class second-rate composer'). Between Bach (the God-fearing court composer and a father of twenty), Strauss (the future creator of highly troubling Salome), and Gould (who preferred pills over food and didn't give his hat or gloves in the hottest summer months), there is plenty food for thought.

It was Glenn Gould's recordings with which I grew up in my home, constantly filled with music and musicians. The recordings of Gould were the impetus for my own musical journey and intense studies. The love and inspiration for the work on this project came from my beloved parents, wonderful sisters, caring friends, and marvelous teachers. I thank them sincerely, as I thank you for spending the hour with some of the most beautiful music ever written."

Polish pianist, Magdalena Baczewska holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Manhattan School of Music, having written a dissertation "In Search of Bach's Cantabile: The Role and Aspects of Oratory and Singing in Keyboard Interpretation." As a winner of international piano competitions, she has appeared as soloist with several orchestras. Her performances have been broadcast on WQXR, NPR, Voice of America, and on European radio and television.

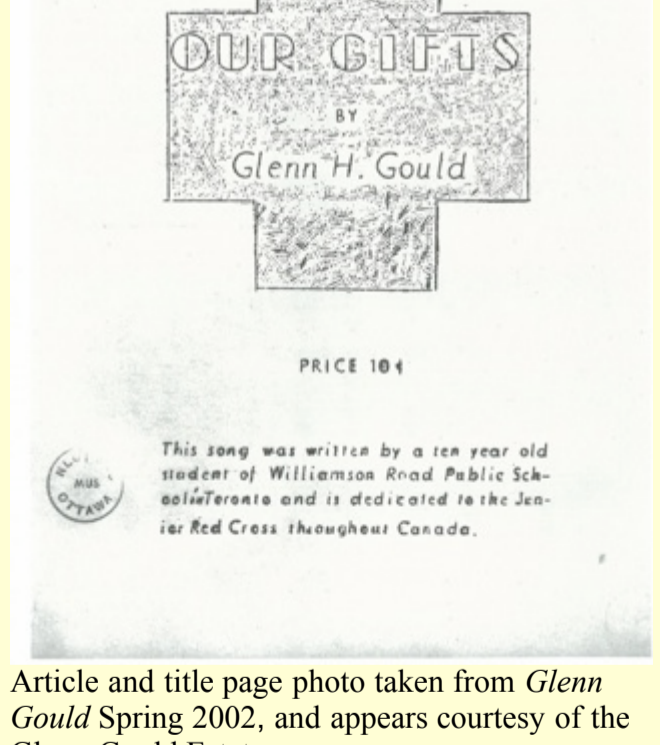
Ms. Baczewska has served on the faculty of Montclair State University in New Jersey as well as the International Keyboard Institute and Festival in NYC. She is also a published music critic (New York Concert Review). Ms. Baczewska has commissioned works for piano and has given several world premieres. Her main focus lies in the early keyboard literature, which she performs both on the harpsichord and the piano.

From the Archives...

Our Gifts -

A song by Glenn Gould

Our Gifts is one of Gould's earliest surviving compositions. He composed this little song, for two vocal parts with piano accompaniment, when he was ten years old and a student at Williamson Road Public School in the Beach neighbourhood of east-end Toronto. As the title page (below) and the song's text suggest, the students at Williamson Road, as at other Canadian schools during the war years, were involved in patriotic and fundraising campaigns like those of the Red Cross. (Facsimile reproduced from Gould's papers in the Music Division of the National Library of Canada.)



Article and title page photo taken from *Glenn Gould* Spring 2002, and appears courtesy of the Glenn Gould Estate.

Snowbanks & Life Lessons

Thoughts on winter in Northern Ontario

By Penny Johnson, GGF contributing author

March 8, 2009

Let's face it friends, we're nowhere near being out of the woods of winter. Still, with the emergence of raindrops and the occasional tulip bud – not to mention the infamous white sneakers that Canadians eagerly don come the beginning of winter's thaw – I pause to reflect upon the spiritual significance of the greyest season of all.

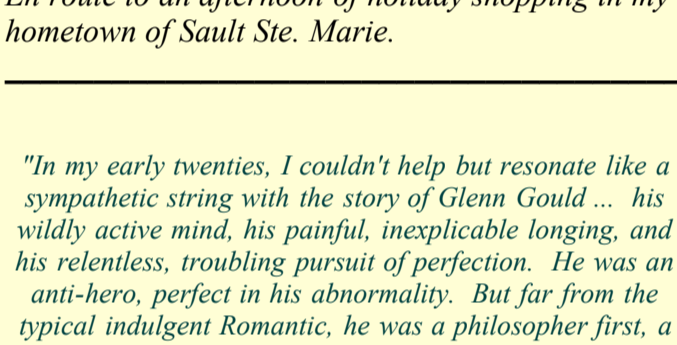
This past December I spent the holidays at home with my family in the northern Ontario city of Sault Ste. Marie. Casually known by Saulites as 'the Soo' – or in a more sardonic vein, 'the Zoo' – this quaint city boasts a population of about 75,000. With the motto, "Naturally Gifted", this gem of the north boasts a great many delights, not the least of which are vast stretches of isolated tundra. No wonder Glenn Gould had an attachment to the region. In fact, my parents inform me that in addition to being able to walk straight off the roof and onto the adjacent snow-bank, they can almost see out the front window!

Just this past week in Toronto, over the course of only a few days, temperatures swooped from -28 degrees Celsius to +16. As is usually the case when spring begins to take root, the survivors of winter – who for the past four months have diligently dressed in long john's, toques, mittens and scarves in an effort to avoid getting frostbite – suddenly emerge from their cocoons, light in step, and with a buoyancy of being (not to mention significantly whiter limbs!)

As we shed our winter blues for the warmth and rejuvenation that spring – and eventually summer – will bring, let us not forget the lessons of winter. Looking out into the white nothingness of the bridge connecting the Canadian Soo with it's border town in Michigan, I feel the sobering reality that is nature and all of her many moods.

Happy as I am to pack away the Sorels for another year, dare I say that the skills necessary for coping with winter are really no different from the rest of his life. In our ability to humbly recall and appreciate 'snowy' memories of the past, juxtaposing them simultaneously alongside others of a more 'sunny' disposition, I suspect that we are in fact nurturing our compassion for our fellow man...and, let us not forget our four-legged friends whose tummies keep our stocking feet cozy in the midst of an icy chill.

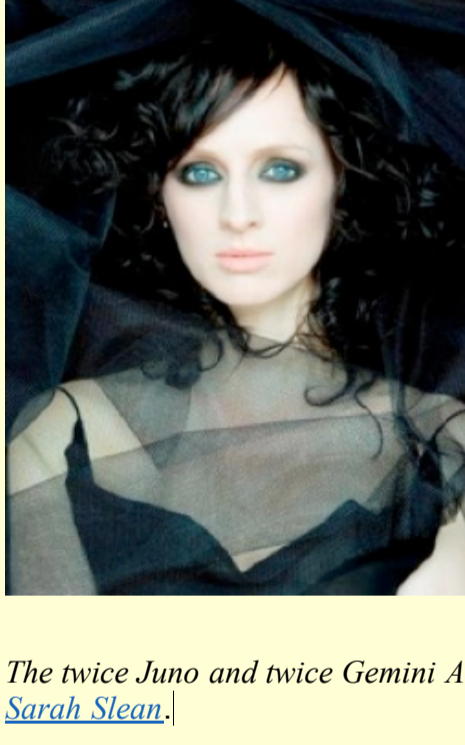
The next time I bask upon the sunny shores of the Pacific in the month of July, sipping freshly squeezed mango juice and wearing multiple layers of sunscreen, I will temper my indulgences with the reality of what has been and will again return in another 5 months or so. To those of you who frequent your roofs more than the shopping mall, and who delight in the rush of adrenalin felt after seeing the plow dump several feet of icy chunks at the end of your driveway, my toque goes off to you!



En route to an afternoon of holiday shopping in my hometown of Sault Ste. Marie.

"In my early twenties, I couldn't help but resonate like a sympathetic string with the story of Glenn Gould ... his wildly active mind, his painful, inexplicable longing, and his relentless, troubling pursuit of perfection. He was an anti-hero, perfect in his abnormality. But far from the typical indulgent Romantic, he was a philosopher first, a giant intellect - ill-equipped to understand humanity, but yet attuned to something VERY CRUCIAL in the universe. That was key for me ... he was scientifically aware of unscientific things. And for that, I admired and adored him."

Much joy, Sarah Slean



The twice Juno and twice Gemini Award nominated Sarah Slean.

If you happen to be in the Ottawa area this month, you may want to check out the following Glenn Gould exhibition:

GLENN GOULD: THE SOUNDS OF GENIUS

Canadian Museum of Civilization
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada



"The most comprehensive exhibition ever presented on Gould's life and work. Assembled primarily from the holdings of the Library and Archives of Canada and on view at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, it was unveiled in the fall of 2007 to mark the 75th anniversary of Gould's birth and the 25th anniversary of his premature death in 1982. It is scheduled to run until May 17, 2009".

(taken from William Littler's column, Entertainment section of the *Toronto Star*, January 24, 2009 - photo courtesy of Don Hunstein)

To learn more, [click here](#).

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for Penny Johnson's exclusive interview with filmmaker, John McGreevy, director of *Glenn Gould's Toronto*. Coming soon to the GGF e-newsletter.