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AUGUST 2009

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Monday, October 26, 2009

Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts

featuring

Gustavo Dudamel

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with Eighth Glenn Gould Prize Laureate

Dr. José Antonio Abreu

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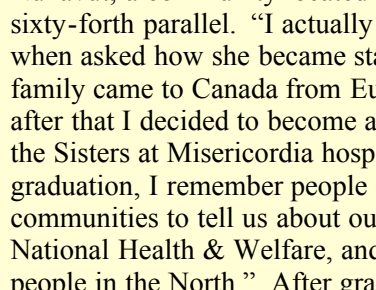
For more information about events, [click here](#)

To order tickets for the opening night gala please phone

The Canadian Opera Company/Four Seasons Centre box office at 416-363-8231

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Looking Back to The Idea of North: An Interview with Marianne Schroeder



By Penny Johnson, GGF contributing author

June 1, 2009

"I was fascinated by the country as such. I flew north from Churchill to Coral Harbour on South Hampton Island at the end of September. Snow had begun to fall, and the country was freshly covered by it. Some of the lakes were frozen around the edges, but towards the centre of the lake you could still see the clear, clear water. And flying over this country you could look down and see various shades of green in the water, and you could see the bottom of the lakes and it was a most fascinating experience."

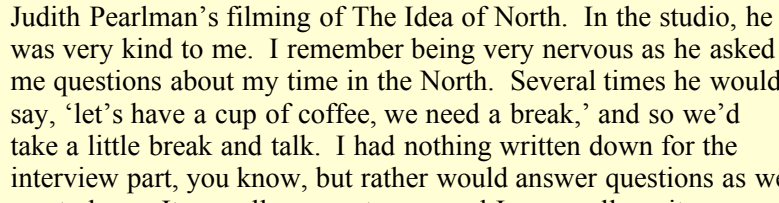
Listening to the gentle voice of Marianne Schroeder in these opening lines from the prologue to *The Idea of North* – a radio documentary produced by Glenn Gould in 1967 as part of the Canadian centennial – I wondered how Glenn came to find interesting people to provide arctic narratives to his contrapuntal radio project. Marianne proved to be just as gracious and warm as I had expected, her countless stories offering a glimpse into her association with Gould and the Canadian North.

As a nurse in the mid-1960s, Marianne – who now lives in Hamilton, Ontario – spent two years living in [Coral Harbour](#), Nunavut, a community located on Southampton Island at the sixty-fourth parallel. "I actually chose to go there," said Marianne, when asked how she became stationed in the remote village. "My family came to Canada from Europe in 1955, and it was not long after that I decided to become a nurse. In 1960, I was accepted by the Sisters at Misericordia hospital in Winnipeg. Before graduation, I remember people coming in from different nursing communities to tell us about our options. Two people were from National Health & Welfare, and they had been taking care of Inuit people in the North." After graduation, Marianne and one of her classmates – a Mennonite from southern Manitoba – went to a small hospital north of Winnipeg where they gained the experience necessary for work in the North.

The story of how Marianne came to work with Glenn on *The Idea of North* – or simply, "North", as it came to be known – is an unusual one. It was during the course of her studies in Winnipeg, that Marianne accepted an invitation to do some babysitting at a local home. The family turned out to be Joan Maxwell Rempel, the well-known mezzo, and her husband Harvey. "Since I had no family in Winnipeg," remarked Marianne, "I ended up becoming quite close to the Rempels, and even spent many a holiday function with them. Joan and Glenn were very good friends, and Glenn was even named a Godfather to one of the Rempel children. It was during this time that Glenn started putting together people to talk about their experiences in the Canadian North."

Marianne recalls a time in the mid-1960s following her time at Coral Harbour when she was living at [Annesley Hall](#), the all-female residence at Victoria College at the University of Toronto. "In through the main doors of Annesley came Glenn one day afternoon," she explained. "He had come to ask if I would be interested in participating in an upcoming radio documentary about the Canadian North. Aside from what Joan had told me, I didn't know much about Glenn at this time. I had heard him give a concert in Detroit back in the late-1950s when my family lived in Windsor. I remember the on-stage mannerisms that had become his trademark, and so needless to say, when I met him I was not surprised by his appearance...shoelaces undone, mismatched socks, disheveled hair, and whatever else I don't remember. I thought to myself, 'yes, I've heard about this fellow.' [Laughs] Unfortunately however, I'm not a musician and so I hadn't followed his career."

She went on to explain that with the exception of [CBC radio](#) technician and long-time Gould friend, Lorne Tulk, none of the participants from North ever met. "I'm not even sure that any of the other participants had anything to do with Glenn other than having been recommended," she remarked. The other participants included Jim Lotz, Frank Vallee, Robert Phillips, and narrator, Wally Maclean. "I don't think Glenn pre-planned the roles for any of the characters," Marianne explained. "I like to think that the characters evolved out of their experiences. Glenn would simply say, 'tell me about your experiences in the Arctic.' That you had lived there was the only criteria."



Marianne describes her encounter with Glenn at the CBC studio on Jarvis Street in Toronto, as being "short-lived", the complete interview taking place over the course of just two or three sessions, each for a few hours. "I saw him only a couple of times," she explained, "unlike some of the other characters (e.g. Jim Lotz). I don't even remember whether I saw him during Judith Pearlman's filming of *The Idea of North*. In the studio, he was very kind to me. I remember being very nervous as he asked me questions about my time in the North. Several times he would say, 'let's have a cup of coffee, we need a break,' and so we'd take a little break and talk. I had nothing written down for the interview part, you know, but rather would answer questions as we went along. It was all so new to me, and I was really quite young and inexperienced. I remember Lorne [Tulk] working from a small, enclosed soundproof chamber of sorts...this memory is a very vivid one. The technology available back then was really quite amazing, and I was particularly struck by Glenn's ability to join the thoughts of each person in such a way as to offer different perspectives on the same theme. I think what Glenn was trying to do was to make a drama out of the voices, coordinating our thoughts so as to create something of a melodic nature. The whole piece was quite operatic in style, and while you couldn't necessarily understand all of the dialogue, you definitely got a sense of what was going on. After all, Glenn knew exactly what he wanted, and how he would go about creating it. I think that's a real gift. Myself, I don't always have it. [Laughs]"

In each of my interviews with Glenn's friends and colleagues, the issue has come up of his having possessed a supreme gift of conversation, and specifically, the ability to ask questions in such a way as to generate the answers he sought. "Glenn really was an excellent interviewer, and as Lorne has said, Glenn would guide people in the direction he wanted them to go. He must have done that with me too. I was listening to North today as a matter of fact, and kept thinking to myself: 'Did I really say that?' I looked at life very differently back then when I was younger. Today, I know that we're all a part of creation...we all are. Nevertheless, the experience did have a great impact on me, learning about the vastness of the world, and how different people are. My experiences in the North taught me respect, although one doesn't have to go there to do that."

Life in the Arctic was not without its challenges, and as Marianne explained, "it's the isolation that eventually takes its toll. I remember being advised not to leave the village on my own, because there were wild packs of dogs. The job itself was a stressful one, and the people couldn't always understand you. The cultures of the Whites and of the Inuit people were very different. Whole families basically lived in one room, grandparents and children. As for amenities, well there wasn't much. In October, the ice was fairly thick and so we'd cut it and use it for water in the nursing station. We did have a short-wave radio and a couple of records which my Mennonite friend would often sing along to. I remember she liked listening to Billy Graham, though I found his voice a little too forceful. [Laughs] In spite of everything, I fell in love with the Arctic. Of course I didn't get into any of this sort of thing with Glenn. He wanted to know about our isolation in the North, and I think the narrator from North put it best when he said that 'in isolation you really come face to face with yourself? That is, you have to work things out: is this my doing?; is it somebody else's doing?; is it nobody else's doing? This is the situation. Of course, I have always been comfortable being alone, and so in that respect, I suppose my time in the North was a natural thing, a product of my need for quiet." Marianne then pulled out some photos taken during her time in Coral Harbour, including one of herself wearing the arctic gear provided by National Health and Welfare. "In those days you could tell men from women based on their clothing," she explained. "Parkas in the Eastern Arctic were different from those in the West. As for snow, there wasn't all that much of it, though I do remember many a whiteout."

The two years spent in Coral Harbour were not the only experiences that Marianne has had in the North. In addition to visits to Fort Smith, Whitehorse, and Skagway, I was most impressed to learn that in 1975, she spent ten days hiking through the Badlands of the Baffin Island. "I had attended some presentations by people who were considering doing a hike in the area, and after a test hike in the Adirondack Mountains, it was agreed that I would join nine men on the journey through the area known as Auyuittuq National Park." Pulling out a guidebook called, *The Land that Never Melts*, Marianne pointed to the cover photo of two hikers in the middle of what appeared to be a vast expanse of northern nothingness, adding that, "the one on the right is me!" Thinking to myself what a brave soul one must have to endure such conditions, Marianne added, "I never thought of it as brave. I just thought of it as a place I'd like to go!"

More than forty years have passed since the creation of *The Idea of North*, a period which has seen tremendous interest towards the program by Gould fans around the world. "I had no idea about the impact this whole project would have, and how widely it would be distributed," explained Marianne. "I just didn't give it too much thought...I just went along with it without thinking of the consequences. My concern at the time was, 'where does this microphone go?' Of course I was aware of his fame and so in a way it was exciting to work with him – particularly during the Canadian centennial for a project which was broadcast by CBC – and go for drives, etc. [Laughs] It's really just one of those things in life that you don't expect could ever happen. I must confess that while I don't understand many of the intricacies of *The Idea of North*, I have come to hear in it a harmony as well as a dissonance, and in this regard it is a highly musical work. Kevin Bazzano, interviewed me for his book, [Wondrous Strange](#), and I must admit that I agree with him that Glenn was very much expressing his own personality in the work."

As the interview came to an end, I asked Marianne if she had ever seen the statue that stands outside The Glenn Gould Studio on Front Street. To my surprise she replied that she had not, and so the two of us visited the popular site. I will not forget the warmth and innocence of Marianne's reaction upon seeing it for the first time: "Oh Glenn," she exclaimed, "there you are after all these years. Old friend, you're looking well!" And with that, she pulled out a scarf that had on it a grand piano, sat down on the bench and posed for a photograph.

Marianne's life has certainly been an exciting one, and as someone who is now about the same age as Marianne was during her time in Coral Harbour, I find myself contemplating what isolation will mean to me forty years from now. I suspect it will always be a refuge for the cultivation of thought and imagination, no doubt, two necessary ingredients in the creation of *The Idea of North*.

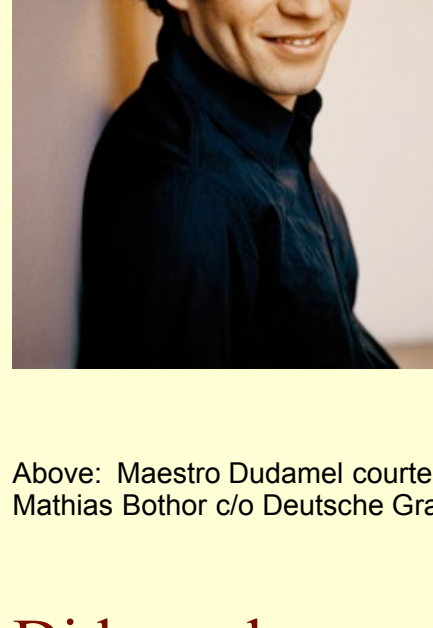
The Eighth Glenn Gould Prize Laureate, Dr. José Antonio Abreu, has selected Venezuelan Conductor Gustavo Dudamel as winner of the prestigious The City of Toronto Glenn Gould Protégé Prize.

Hailed as one of the most exciting and compelling conductors of our time, the 28-year old Maestro Dudamel will begin his tenure as Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic in fall 2009. Perhaps best known as Music Director of the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela, his infectious energy and exceptional artistry have made him one of the most sought-after conductors by orchestras around the world.

The Glenn Gould Foundation congratulates Gustavo Dudamel for his outstanding achievement and contribution to classical music.

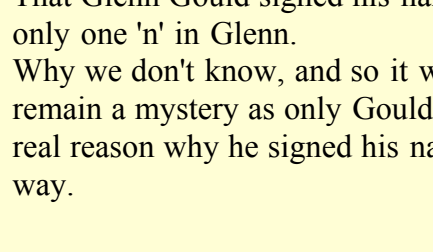
The **Glenn Gould Prize** is an international award bestowed by [The Glenn Gould Foundation](#) in memory of noted [Canadian pianist Glenn Gould](#). It is awarded every third year to a living individual in recognition of his/her contributions to [music](#) and [communication](#).

Prize laureates receive a purse of [C\\$50,000](#), and are given the responsibility of naming the recipient of the [City of Toronto](#) Glenn Gould Protégé Prize. Protégés receive C\$15,000.



Above: Maestro Dudamel courtesy of Mathias Bothor c/o Deutsche Grammophon

Did you know...



That Glenn Gould signed his name with only one 'n' in Glenn. Why we don't know, and so it will always remain a mystery as only Gould knew the real reason why he signed his name that way.

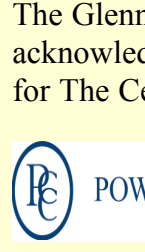
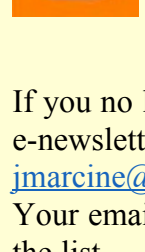
New GGF Website

We will be launching our new website in the next month or two, with even more featured articles about Glenn Gould and special events surrounding the Foundation too.

Watch for more information about our new look by checking the website on a regular basis at [www.glenn Gould.ca](#).

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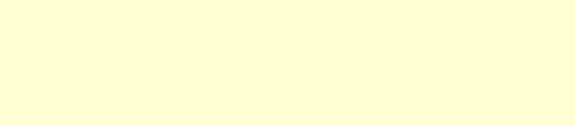
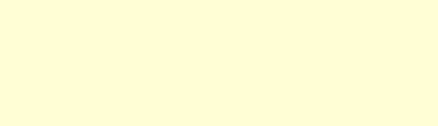
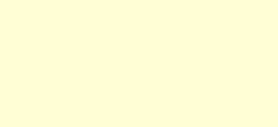
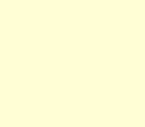
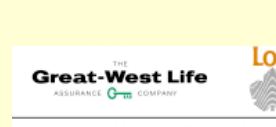
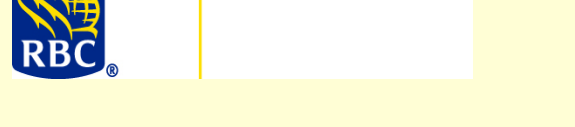
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