



THE GLENN GOULD MONTHLY

JUNE 2009

Thoughts on Glenn Gould

The following poems were written by two gentlemen who share a great admiration for the gifted musician we all know as Glenn Gould.

We thank Charlotte Allstrom, longtime friend of W. R. Mobley, and Dr. Fahl who generously donated these poems to our foundation.

As well, these submissions came to us by avid supporters of the The Glenn Gould Foundation. Therefore, we encourage you to send in submissions that you may have relating to Glenn Gould too.

Please email to jmarcine@glenn Gould.ca if you think you have something we may want to publish. We will certainly contact you if we decide to use your submission in an upcoming e-newsletter.

1982

By W. R. Mobley

A nearly discarnate entity,
his physical aspect diminishing,
absent from the stage,
communicating by telephone,
an image on a screen.

An oceanic consciousness,
he anticipated cyberspace,
casting his web worldwide
from an isolated studio,

His lifestyle a mirror image of conventional,
he renounced the routine diurnal cycle,
his nocturnal nature forgoing aubade,
countering hemispheric seasonal variation.

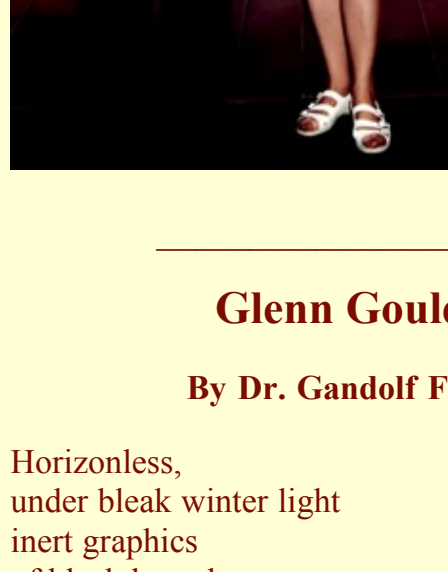
Menuhin referred to his "ephemeral presence,"
a presence felt by mourner clusters
at St. Paul's Anglican, one note absent.
As Glenn said in conversation:
"You do not have to sound a root tone
for that tone to be psychologically present."

W. R. Mobley (Bob) earned his masters degree in Creative Writing from The Johns Hopkins University. His career was largely spent as a medical writer/editor. On a part-time basis, he taught occasional courses in American literature and English composition.

Bob's interest in classical music dates back at least to adolescence. With his excellent singing voice, he was chosen for leading roles in several musicals staged by regional orchestral groups, and he won a music scholarship enabling him to complete his college studies.

It may have been Bob's special interest in Baroque composers, such as Bach, that led him to Glenn Gould; Bob may also have been attracted to several of Gould's unique personality characteristics, such as his preference for being alone and his fascination with the concept of "Far North."

As is true for many of Gould's admirers, Bob acquired a large collection of his recordings, as well as videos about his life. Bob was always eager to attend whatever lectures or special commemorative events he could, whether in New York or Toronto.



W.R. Mobley with longtime partner Charlotte Allstrom

Glenn Gould

By Dr. Gandolf Fahl

Horizonless,
under bleak winter light
inert graphics
of black branches -
suddenly,
a trembling of glacial lands:
Glenn Gould pian piano plays
and cascades
of bright streaming sounds
waken misty-white terrain
to filigrees of a song.

Dr. Gandolf Fahl's 'inspiration' for the poem came to him when he once listened to Glenn Gould playing Bach, a revelation, so he ordered the wonderful publication *Glenn Gould: A Life in Pictures*. There, the double page with Glenn Gould on a winter day, became associated with a photo of a cedar branch in the winter time taken by Dr. Fahl.

So a poem and the photo enigmatically joined, and, in a way, in honour of Glenn Gould. The calendar was soon composed with different photos and poems for each month. What follows is Dr. Fahl's poem about Glenn Gould in German, as part of this calendar:

2009

Glenn Gould

Horizontlos
bleichen Winterlichts
todesstarre Grafik
schwarzer Äste –
doch plötzlich hebt das Eis
Glenn Gould pian piano spielt,
hell strömen in Kaskaden Klänge
und wecken nebelweißes Land zu
filigranem Lied.

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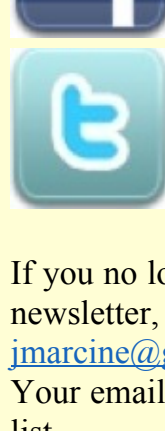
Dr. Fahl studied law at J. W. Goethe University and taught international law in Edinburgh University in Scotland for one year. His favorite music is classical music, and his favourite composers are Camus, Racine, Proust, Rilke, and Maguerite Duras.

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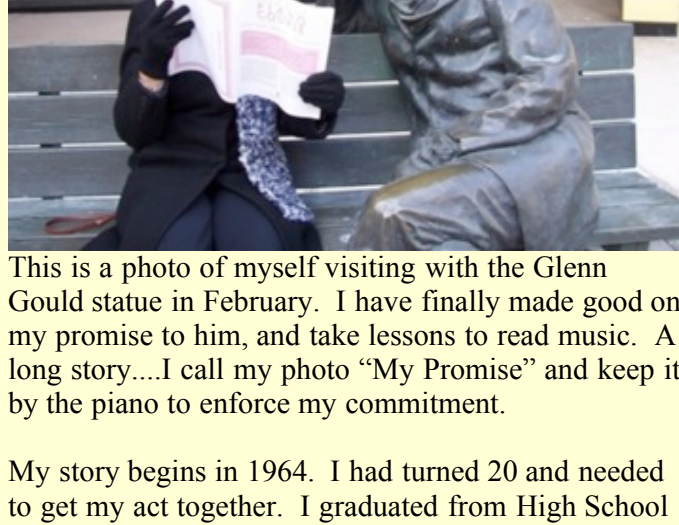


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My Promise

The Glenn Gould Foundation recently received the following poignant and heart-warming story from Erika Neher, a native of Orillia, Ontario, whose memory about an encounter with Glenn Gould, forty-five years ago at his cottage on Lake Simcoe, provides a glimpse into the generosity of this deeply moral icon of the twentieth century.

By Erika Neher



This is a photo of myself visiting with the Glenn Gould statue in February. I have finally made good on my promise to him, and take lessons to read music. A long story...I call my photo "My Promise" and keep it by the piano to enforce my commitment.

My story begins in 1964. I had turned 20 and needed to get my act together. I graduated from High School a couple of years ago and was working with my father in the TV repair business. Not by choice. Being the oldest, the role fell on me and my father was not the kind to lavish compliments, but rather find faults in your work. My self esteem was at its lowest, and eventually I wanted to do something else and to prove to myself that I could do something totally different if I wanted to. I signed up to compete in the Kiwanis Festival in 1964. My choice of music was the first movement of Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata. It was in the Grade 8 level. My age limited me to choose that level of work.

I had played for fun by ear for a few years, but never learned to read music or study seriously. I bought the sheet music and named all the notes and then memorized them. I also went out and bought a record by Horowitz (of all pianists, Horowitz, who I later found out was not one of Glenn's favourites. A good thing I never mentioned it to him) playing the Moonlight Sonata. This I played over and over to memorize it. At this time I also phoned several music teachers to ask for help with the fingering to get me through. Out of 5, I found one who was willing to help, although reluctantly. While working on a television, I overheard an interview by the CBC with Glenn Gould. Something about the interview, and how casual Glenn was when I first met him in front of the record store in Orillia, as I bought one of his albums, told me that I could solicit his help with this piece. At best, just to give me some pointers. The interview took place at his cottage, so close to my hometown, Orillia, I was tempted to call. It was Bert Gould, his father who answered the phone and volunteered his help. I still can hear my father telling me how ridiculous it was to expect someone so famous to help me. Nevertheless, a friend of mine had a boat and told me he knew how to get to the cottage, so off we went. I clutched my music book on the way and nervously went through several forms of introduction. Hello Mr. Gould...Hello Glenn, I am so sorry to bother you, but your father said you would not mind... Oh I am so thrilled to meet you... etc. etc. etc. When we arrived, Glenn was outside, walking and conducting. He was in his coat, hat and cut off gloves (the kind I had seen, for the first time ever at the Kensington Market, the merchants were all wearing them). We used to enjoy the market while attending The National Institute of Trade and took a course in Transistors. Glenn made his way over to the boat. He was keenly interested in the motor that sputtered its way on to shore. My friend volunteered to stay with the boat and see what was the matter while I got my help. Glenn looked inquisitively. I explained that his father had told us just to take a chance and catch him at the cottage. He had advised me that Glenn would be away a lot.

I must have apologized several times for the intrusion without notice, but he didn't mind. Like an 18th-century gentleman, he bowed and invited me to walk toward the cottage. I explained my hope for help with this piece. We walked into the cottage and I left my shoes at the door. I always walked around barefoot or in socks, so it was an automatic for me. He motioned me to the piano and said in a German accent, "well young lady, let me see what you can do." I was not sure whether he was mocking me, (as that had been the norm with the school kids) or not. He was so personal and friendly, that I soon realized he loved using that accent. This made me happy. I was 20 and mousy. I played my piece, on what I think was the Chickering piano. It had a beautiful touch...a bit of a klinky sound to it. Glenn was somewhat away from me, not watching me, (which would have made me nervous) and conducted. When I finished he came over and looked at my book over my shoulder. When he saw it, he laughed and stated..."You don't know how to read music?...why would you put yourself through this self-induced torture? Especially a competition?" I explained to him it was not to win, but to prove to myself that I could do this. I remember the pensive look on his face and then he said, "Well, let me show you how it should be played. Your pedaling was all wrong." He marked long strokes in my book to indicate where the pedal should go up and down. Then he played the piece and I watched and listened. Then he got up and again motioned for me to play. Talk about a thrill of your life. I was playing the same keyboard right after the master.

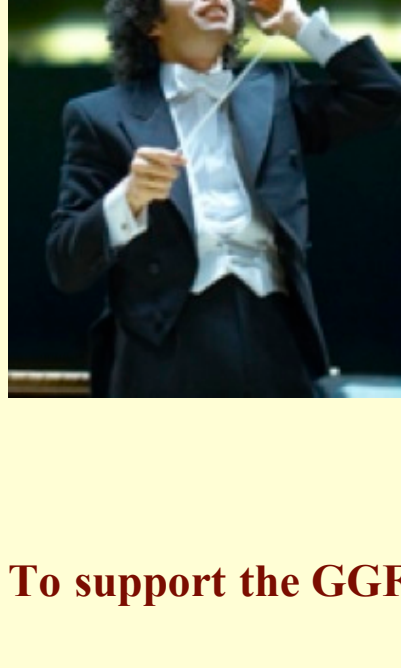
I played the piece and he conceded that it was better. "Now practice, practice and practice. Then relax and do nothing for a day before the contest. Then go in and just play." I got up from the piano and he played a few pieces. I think for fun. He seemed to really enjoy putting on a show. He started talking about music, a lot of it above my head and beyond my understanding, as I had never studied music seriously, least of all the technical side of it. We discussed many different topics and the last advice he gave me was..."Make sure you take lessons to read music, so many doors will open to you. You have a real feeling for music." I remember saying something to the point that I would before I die, and the conversation somehow led to how long we expected to live. I remember saying something about 70 and he said, in a very flamboyant way, waving his arms around, "I shall live to be a 100, but do it in half the time." You can imagine the significance of that statement when he died at 50.

Anyhow, I promised that if life was so busy and I had not taken sight-reading lessons by the time I applied for my pension, then I would sign up. As I left, he gave me a special hand shake and said, "you can do this...go out there and let your light shine." I played in the Kiwanis festival and left right after. It was not of importance to find out how I stood. The fact that I played the piece flawlessly, and without tension (I kept thinking of Glenn telling me "you can do this, let your light shine") was my goal and I did it.

Later a friend told me that I placed fourth. Boris Berlin was the adjudicator. My turned my light on that day and never turned it off. I life became busy. More volunteering, using my abilities and helping others from Sunday School, to Scouting, etc. (the meaning for which I took from, "let your light shine") than working to earn a living.

Erika Neher

The Glenn Gould Foundation congratulates *El Sistema* protégé, Gustavo Dudamel for making *Time* magazine's list of the world's 100 most influential people for 2008. Maestro Dudamel is the famed conductor of the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra and soon-to-be conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. To read more, [click here](#).



Gustavo Dudamel Photo courtesy of Anna Hult, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra

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