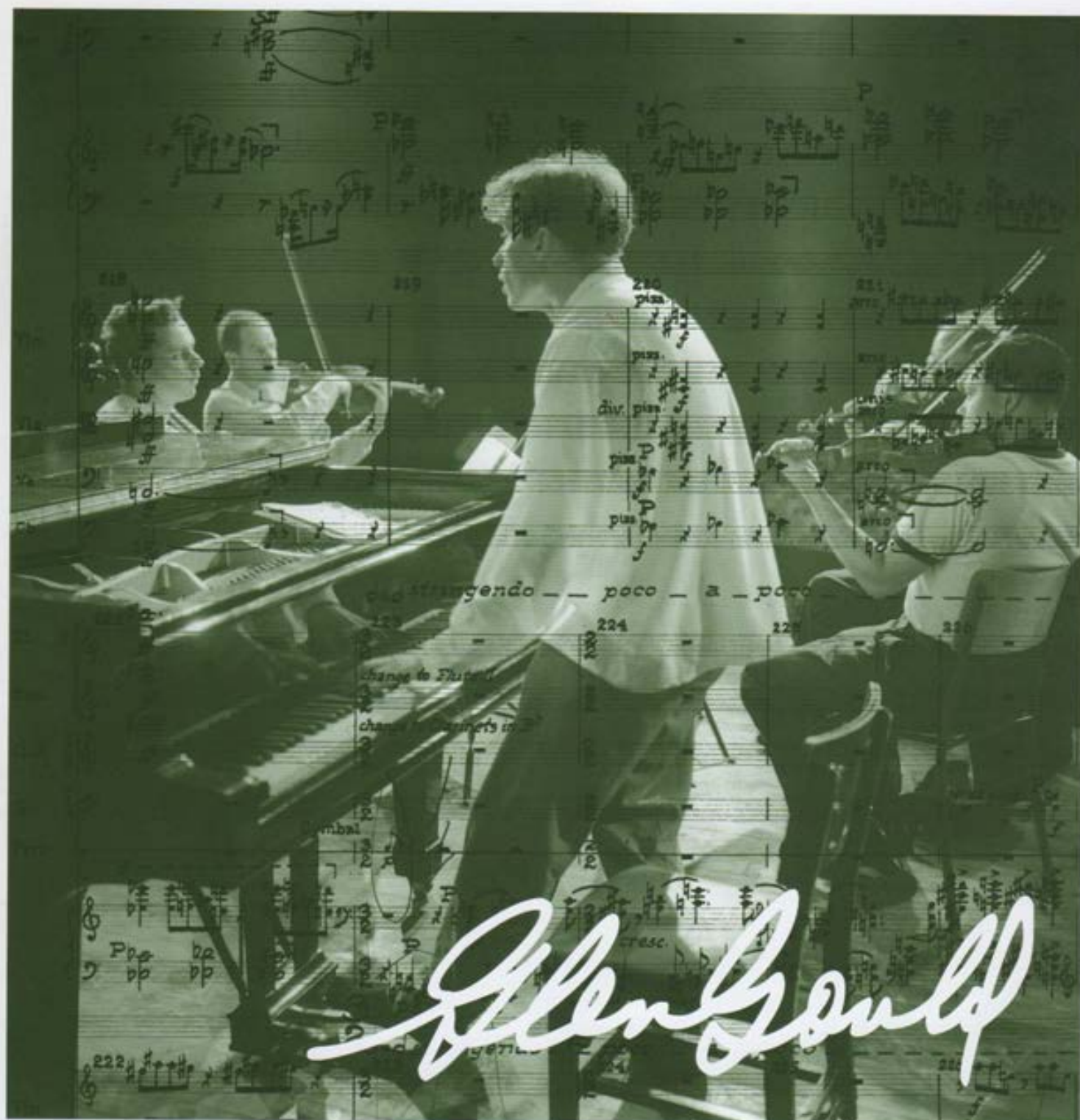




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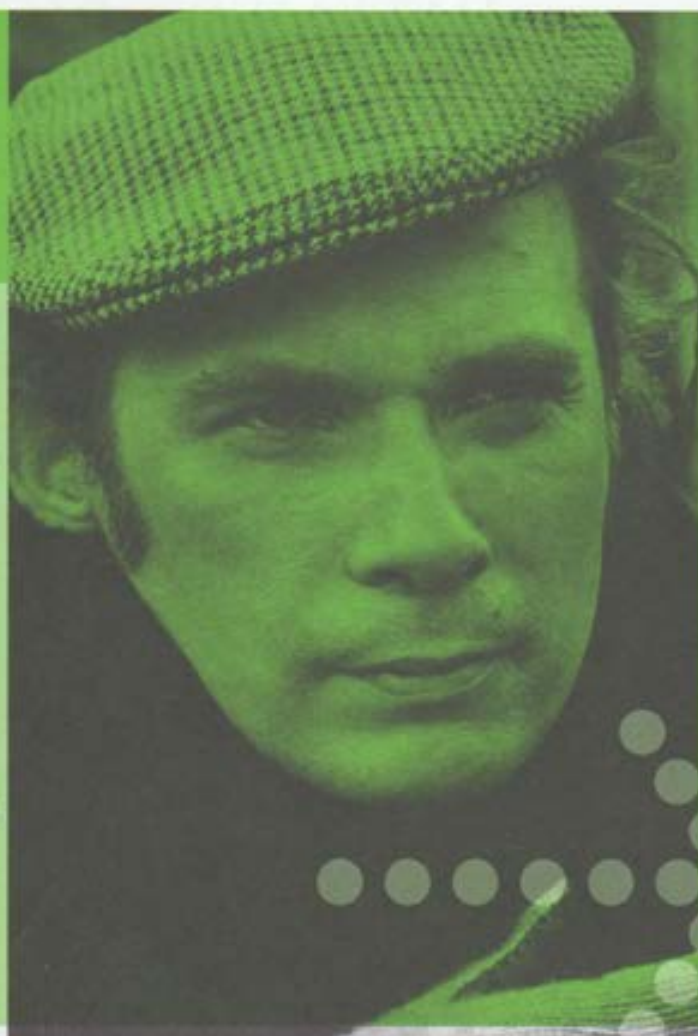
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The Schoenberg Series

Part 6

The Symphonist (Part 2)

KEN HASLAM: Well, Glenn, I know that the Second Chamber Symphony was begun during Schoenberg's early years, but I would gather, in those relatively advanced opus numbers [that the announcer] George McLean just recited, that all three works relate in some way to Schoenberg's American residence.

GLENN GOULD: Well, in spirit I think they do, Ken; certainly the Piano Concerto was written in America, of course, in 1943. But only about a quarter of the Second Chamber Symphony was composed—or rewritten—in the United States, and the *Accompaniment to a Film Scene* was actually penned as early as 1930.

K.H.: Oh, while Schoenberg was still in Europe, then.

G.G.: Right, uh-huh.

K.H.: Well, now, *that* piece is *terra incognita* to me, Glenn. Did

Gould chatting with Walter Susskind, the Toronto Symphony's conductor from 1956 to 1965, and Mrs. Susskind. Gould, playing Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 2, was the first soloist to appear with the orchestra under Susskind, on 23 and 24 October 1956. (This photograph is taken from Arnold Edinborough's book *A Personal History of The Toronto Symphony* (ca. 1973), where it appears uncredited.)

Schoenberg have a cinematic property in mind?

G.G.: Not so far as I know.

K.H.: Oh, but surely he wasn't simply carrying on an "anything Erich Wolfgang Korngold can do I can do more dramatically" campaign? [They laugh.]

G.G.: No, I'm really not sure what his motives were. The piece was written, of course, in the era of the Hollywood émigré, when so many of Schoenberg's Central European colleagues gravitated to the States—to California in particular, of course. And I guess it's reasonable to assume that reports would filter home to the effect that one was not likely to strike it rich in America writing twelve-tone string quartets. But I very much doubt that Schoenberg ever seriously flirted with a career in film.

K.H.: Well, I certainly can't imagine him in the "Ready when you are, C.B.!" mode.

G.G.: Nor can I. Mind you, I'm sure if any movie moguls, European or American, had agreed to use his score unabridged, he'd probably have taken the money and run. Schoenberg was not an entirely impractical man, you know.

K.H.: Yeah. But, now, I gather you feel that the work itself—the *Accompaniment to a Film Scene*—does stand on its own musical feet without any cinematic props.

G.G.: I think it does. I don't know it well, frankly, Ken, but I have a certain affection for it. Mind you, I think that a more plausible scenario for its composition would relate to the fact that Schoenberg could probably, at that time in his life, think of no better excuse to concoct a relatively free-form symphonic poem, you know.

K.H.: Mm-hm, mm-hm. Now, am I right in thinking that there had been nothing in that genre since *Pelleas and Melisande* [of 1903]?

G.G.: Absolutely right, and the *Accompaniment* really is as close as Schoenberg ever got to a twelve-tone tone poem, actually.

K.H.: [laughing] I really am curious about it, Glenn. Let's hear it.

G.G.: Coming up.

[MUSIC: Schoenberg, *Begleitungsmusik zu einer Lichtspielszene (Drohende Gefahr, Angst, Katastrophe)* [accompaniment music to a film scene (threatening danger, anxiety, catastrophe)], Op. 34.]

K.H.: Well, that's a fascinating piece, Glenn. You know, I really liked it.

G.G.: Yeah, so do I. It grows on you. By the way, I should have mentioned that the performance was conducted by Robert Craft—

K.H.: Oh, and that, of course, brings us to the second work on the program: the Piano Concerto—because Robert Craft is once again the conductor, the CBC Symphony is the orchestra on this occasion, and you, sir, are the soloist.

G.G.: Guilty.



↑
Arnold Schoenberg in uniform sometime between December 1915 and October 1916, during which months he served in the First World War, as a volunteer in the Austrian army. (© Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna.)

K.H.: And, I would imagine, it also brings us to a continuation of your speculations of last week [Part 5], about Schoenberg as symphonist manqué.

G.G.: Yeah, I guess it does. I must say that I can't think of any better evidence for the fact that Schoenberg deserved that title than that we would trouble to write a Piano Concerto at all.

K.H.: Oh, dear, not *that* leitmotif again?

G.G.: I beg your pardon, sir. Are you experiencing a certain sense of déjà vu, perhaps?

K.H.: Oh, how kind of you to notice. It *does* seem as though I've heard it all before.

G.G.: Sorry about that.

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Program for the first concert performances of Schoenberg's Piano Concerto ever given in Canada, on 6 and 7 December 1960. Gould had previously been soloist in the Canadian premiere of the concerto, a performance broadcast from a CBC radio studio on 21 December 1953, with the CBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Jean-Marie Beaudet. (Glenn Gould Archive, Music Division, Library and Archives Canada.)

K.H.: And from the honourable gentlemen opposite, moreover.

G.G.: As they say in Hansard [the official published record of Canada's federal Parliament], sir, "Shame! Shame!" [They laugh.]

K.H.: Well, Mr. G., it's your program to muck about with as you choose, lad! [They laugh.] But I do think that if you're going to wind down this conversation via the quasi-political, quasi-sociological route that you usually pursue when discussing concerti, you should, at least, declare a vested interest in the argument.

G.G.: Well, all right, Kenneth, I'm prejudiced. I'm not a concerto fancier, as you might say.

K.H.: Hmm, the understatement of the week!

G.G.: I hardly ever listen to them. I tend to leap for the dial when I hear them coming at me on the radio, and—

K.H.: —and the Bach concerti aside, you don't even record them, either, at least not in recent years [i.e., since recording Beethoven's "Emperor" in 1966].

G.G.: That's right, yes.

K.H.: So you will agree that you've a very special ax to grind in the matter, and, to put it mildly, a rather eccentric approach to the subject of concertos and concerto-writing.

G.G.: Well, I do not think it's all that eccentric, Kenneth. I prefer to think that it's historically validatable, as a matter of fact.

K.H.: Well, I'm sure you do! [They laugh.] But, you'll admit that, in attempting to "validate" your theories, sir, you've been known to carry the argument to fairly ludicrous lengths.

G.G.: No, I certainly *don't* admit that.

K.H.: Oh, come on, Glenn! I recall that about—what? about five years ago? [15 July 1969]—you took to the [CBC radio] airwaves [in *The Art of Glenn Gould*, "Take 9"] and delivered a thoroughly biased broadside on the subject of concertos, and, if I'm not mistaken, you even invited a psychiatrist [Joseph Stephens] as interview guest on the program. And then you—

G.G.: And then I suggested to him that one cannot divorce the idea of the nineteenth-century concerto from (as you've already stated for us, Kenneth) certain quasi-political, quasi-sociological motivations that *are* built into it.

K.H.: Right! And, if I may say so, gave voice to some absolutely outrageous variations upon your favourite theme of competition-as-social-menace, using the concerto as prototype, and with which your psychiatrist-guest, as I was delighted to note, simply refused to go along.

G.G.: [laughing] Well, he was a very reactionary chap, as I recall—someplace to the right of Prince Metternich.

K.H.: [laughing] Well, I recall that he presented some remarkably credible arguments for the concerto-as-musical-panacea.

G.G.: Well, of course he did, Kenneth. Psychiatrists are hooked on conflict surrogates; you know that.

K.H.: Well, I don't want to open up *that* whole can of worms again, Glenn. We've done the act both privately and, with the [CBC] corporation's indulgence, publicly before.

G.G.: True, true ...

K.H.: No, I'll concede that the late-nineteenth-century concerto was sometimes carried to excess as a vehicle for preening soloists and combative conductors.

G.G.: Well, that's very good of you, and you've just stated my case very concisely, so I can go home now—

K.H.: Well, no, hear me out, Glenn, because I was going to add that I can't believe Schoenberg ever wrote to the balcony—well, certainly not in either of his two major concerti.

G.G.: Well, OK, to get serious for a minute, Ken: In the sense that Moszkowski did, or Scharwenka did, Schoenberg probably did *not* write to the balcony. But, as I said earlier, it seems to me that there was a fundamental inconsistency involved in Schoenberg's pursuit of the concerto per se, and it's the inconsistency that I wanted to explore, rather than the quality of the music itself, although I suppose one really shouldn't separate the two phenomena. But, whatever his *intentions*, I think that he was writing, in effect, a nineteenth-century concerto in terms of the deployment of his forces, and I think that he was simply defeated by the concept.

K.H.: Oh, well, would you care to list the major battlefields?

G.G.: [laughing] All right. It's in four movements, more or less linked together à la Liszt. The first is a set of variations. The fourth, which is a rondo, by the way, uses inverted forms of the row primarily and inserts yet another, and really gorgeous, set of variations as its central episode. The second movement is a scherzo, and the third is a *Largo* which, for its central episode, offers a tutti containing some of the most ecstatic counterpoint Schoenberg ever concocted.

K.H.: How, sir, can you dip into adjectives like "gorgeous" and "ecstatic" and expect to succeed with a put-down of the piece?

G.G.: Well, because, first of all, I'm *not* really attempting a put-down of the piece, Ken—these things are relative, after all, and I do have a certain affection for it—but I *did* neglect to say, of course, that the third-movement tutti is set up by an unbelievably mechanistic piano cadenza, that the first-movement variations are disrupted at their climax by a gratuitous outburst of thirty-second-note pyrotechnics from the soloist immediately prior to the—

K.H.: Yes, yes, yes, yes, I've got the message! [laughing] Why don't we bask in the tutti and ignore the solo spots, and, for that matter, the soloist?

G.G.: Splendid idea! Oh, I'd consider that a favour, sir. [They laugh.]

[MUSIC: Schoenberg, Piano Concerto, Op. 42.
Glenn Gould, piano; CBC Symphony Orchestra,
conducted by Robert Craft
(1961 Columbia Masterworks recording).]

K.H.: Well, I will concede that it's a very—shall we say?—*busy* page [i.e., the closing "Stretta" of the finale]. Maybe it's the busyness that bothers me a little.

G.G.: Could be. But it didn't bother you in the *Accompaniment to a Film Scene*, which made use of a texture every bit as vitamin-enriched.

K.H.: No, that's true.

G.G.: Well, Ken, I think that what you intuitively—and, in my view, rightly—reacted against—and, I suspect, not only in the coda, were the truth known—is the really quite artificial definition of labour as between soloist and tutti forces.

K.H.: But then, why wouldn't I react similarly to, well, to the Khachaturian concerto, to cite your example.

G.G.: Oh, because Khachaturian was involved with a nineteenth-century party-piece, whereas Schoenberg was attempting to work with twentieth-century materials, and—

K.H.: Ah, but making them fit preset forms.

G.G.: In a nutshell.

K.H.: Ah-ha. Well, OK, why don't we move on to a work that, from what you've told me privately, is obviously much closer to your heart.

G.G.: The Second Chamber Symphony.

K.H.: Right. Now, am I right in assuming that it was a successor effort to the first work in that form, which he heard on the opening program of the series?

G.G.: Uh, yes and no. It started out to be, certainly. Schoenberg began work on it in 1906, about the time when he'd finished the First Chamber Symphony, Op. 9, then set it aside, took it up again in 1911, again in 1916, but apparently with considerable frustration on both occasions, and only wrote "Finis" in 1939.

K.H.: Well, now, how do the 1939 segments compare to the 1906 original?

G.G.: Fascinatingly—but therein hangs a tale. You see, I have a rather special theory about this piece, a theory to the elucidation of which I once devoted many pages of relatively close-set type. [Editor's note: See his 1967 liner notes on the Chamber Symphony No. 2, reprinted in *The Glenn Gould Reader*, pages 134-42.]

K.H.: [laughing] —but which you will now sum up for my benefit in a hundred words or less.

G.G.: Well, don't trouble to count. Anyway, it has to do, basically, with the notion that Schoenberg's harmonic development falls

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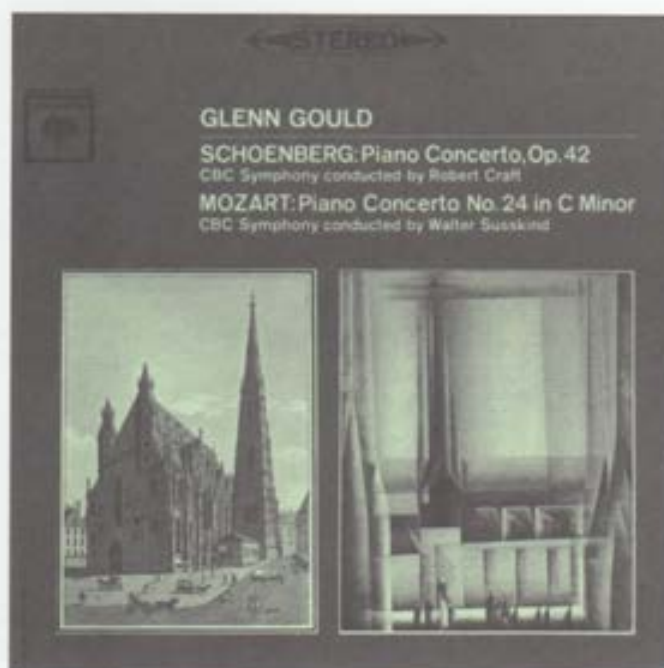
f rubato

f

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A page of solo-piano music from one of Gould's own scores of Schoenberg's Piano Concerto, Op. 42. His annotations relate to the music's tone-row structure. (Glenn Gould Archive, Music Division, Library and Archives Canada.)



1962 Columbia album. Incidentally, Gertrud Schoenberg once said that Gould's interpretation of her late husband's concerto was unrivalled.

into three stages, essentially—and I'm not talking about the obvious classifications of tonality, atonality, twelve-tone, or anything of that sort. Rather, I'm talking about the manner in which Schoenberg's *idea* of harmony evolved independently of any or all of those labels. For example, as we already discussed—during our *Liederabend* [song evening—i.e., Part 2], I think it was—Schoenberg's first style, the post-Romantic tonal style, was the product of an interest in a certain climate of ambiguity, a certain fondness for (I think you said at the time) musical double entendres.

K.H.: Mmm, right.

G.G.: But, unlike many of his contemporaries at that time, Schoenberg very rarely fell into the trap of sequences, of jacked-up repetitions of the same material at a given interval's remove, you know, in order to keep the structure going. He almost always prepared connecting links as intercessionary elements which could relate to any two adjacent chords, no matter how remote those chords might be.

K.H.: Oh, yeah.

G.G.: Now, Stage 2, obviously, is that point at which Schoenberg abandons the connecting links *as* connecting links and exploits their tension-laden presence for its own sake. And that stage, of course, sponsors most of the so-called "atonal" works. There is still, as always in the Western musical tradition, a sense of relative repose, but the operative word is "relative," I think, and the wholly inapplicable word is "resolution." It's essentially a

stage in which the suspenseful agents have achieved autonomy per se and that autonomy has taken precedence over their potential for resolution. ... Are you still with me?

K.H.: ... Uh, I *think* so. But you're way over the one-hundred-word limit, Glenn. [They laugh.] Now, you did say that there were *three* stages involved.

G.G.: Yeah, yeah. I think that the third stage of Schoenberg's harmonic thinking is superficially not unlike Stage 1, but again the accent is on "superficially." Once again, he unashamedly employs triads, but he's no longer particularly concerned about linking these triads in such a way as to form an acceptable tonal pattern.

K.H.: Well, now, wait a second. Do you mean he was using triads atonally?

G.G.: I guess in a way I do, Ken, but not in the sense that buried deep within a morass of dissonance one finds a nugget of triadic consonance, you know. The triads—and, of course, they're not necessarily that; they're not necessarily or exclusively triads—are, on occasion, as exposed as hymn chords. Anyway, in Phase 3, Schoenberg minimizes the role of dissonant suspension; in fact, he eschews suspension to a very considerable extent altogether. He places "low-yield dissonances" in conjunction one with the other, and, on many occasions—certainly not exclusively, but on many occasions—he allows them to elide in such a way that one has the impression that, with a minimum of connective tissue, new triadic inter-relationships have been set up.

K.H.: Four hundred and fifty words and counting ...

G.G.: Oh, thank-you, sir. Your abacus is in good form today. But moving right along, then: My notion is that Schoenberg's supposed conservatism, as manifest in his American years, was really a radical new use of tonal phenomena, which he had arrived at precisely *because* of twelve-tone pursuits—phenomena which he subsequently reapplied within a neo-tonal ambience.

K.H.: Hmm. And I gather, then, that you're recommending the Second Chamber Symphony as prime evidence for this theory?

G.G.: I am indeed—particularly the latter third or so of it, which was written in America. I think that in its deceptively conservative way it's a rather radical work, curiously enough. And I think that the consequences implicit in it, with its emphasis on a new system of tonal organization, are only now, at a time when many composers are suddenly developing a new taste and tolerance for tonality, beginning to be felt. ■

[MUSIC: Schoenberg,
Chamber Symphony No. 2, Op. 38.
Columbia Symphony Orchestra,
conducted by Robert Craft.]



The Schoenberg Series

Part 7

The Dramatist

[MUSIC: Schoenberg, *Moses und Aron*/
"Zwischenspiel" [interlude] between Acts 1 and 2.
Orchestra and chorus of Norddeutscher Rundfunk,
conducted by Hans Rosbaud.]

ANNOUNCER: ... This survey of Schoenberg's operatic works continues as Glenn Gould, entering from stage right, and Ken Haslam, from stage left, engage in a duet concerning the composer's chamber opera *Von heute auf morgen*, Op. 32.

KEN HASLAM: And a work that is totally unfamiliar to me, I'm afraid.

GLENN GOULD: *Von heute auf morgen*? Well, I would like to say that you've missed a great deal, Ken, but in all conscience I really can't.

Arnold and Gertrud Schoenberg with their fox terrier, Witz (= "wit"), in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, near Monaco on the French Riviera, 1928 or 1929, at which time Schoenberg was finishing one opera, *Von heute auf morgen*, and about to embark on another, *Moses und Aron*. (© Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna.)

K.H.: Uh-huh. Well, now, I know, of course, that it's a comic opera, and, as such, I suppose, it represented for Schoenberg the other side of the dramaturgic mask vis-à-vis *Moses und Aaron*.

G.G.: Well, I think that's certainly true. *Moses und Aaron*, of course, is really a series of tableaux—almost an oratorio, really. *Von heute auf morgen*, on the other hand—

K.H.: — which translates, I gather, as “from today til tomorrow”— something like that?

G.G.: Something like that, yeah. And, as its title suggests, it’s concerned with some rather self-conscious comments on the perils of being ensnared by the Zeitgeist, by the mores of one’s own time.

K.H.: Well, now, I should think that *that* theme would prove particularly attractive to you, Mr. G.

G.G.: Oh, it does, as a theme. It’s just that, prior to getting the point across, Schoenberg puts his central characters (who are man and wife, by the way) through a series of rather abrasive, *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*-type exchanges, you know. Well, I tell you, Ken, imagine a dialogue by Noël Coward supered upon a *mise-en-scène* created by Salvador Dalí and with a plot structure by the think-tank responsible for *The Secret Storm*. [They laugh.]

K.H.: Good heavens!

G.G.: Yeah, well, it’s a rather weird, surrealistic mix, actually. You know, the gas-man arrives to collect his bill in the middle of the night—that sort of thing—and the lady of the house magically changes costume without troubling to leave the stage—the costume changes, of course, reflecting the varying degrees of admiration and affection in which she’s held by her husband. And these incidents illuminate an argument between the two of them about who’s been guilty of ogling whom at a party they’ve attended earlier in the evening. The wife accuses the husband of flirting with a friend of hers, a friend unburdened with household responsibilities, etc., etc.

K.H.: [laughing] A sort of early Women’s Lib tract, then, is it?

G.G.: Something like that. And he, in turn, opines that the missus has herself been giving the eye to an opera singer who was the party’s guest of honour. It’s very much a piece of its time.

K.H.: Let’s see, that’s the early thirties?

G.G.: Right—late twenties, early thirties, exactly. And it’s all about crises of esteem and identity and stuff like that-there.

K.H.: Hmm. Now, the segment that we’re going to hear—?

G.G.: —is the finale, if I can apply that term to such a very un-grand opera. And it begins with the opera singer and the wife’s friend, who have more or less picked each other up at party’s end, descending upon our hero and heroine, ostensibly for a cup of coffee, even as the husband and wife are in the throes of their big “I’ll be true to you in my fashion” scene.

K.H.: And I assume the gas-man has vacated the premises by this time? [They laugh.]

G.G.: He has indeed! Actually, the first voices we hear, more or less coming through the door, are those of the opera singer and his newfound enamorata, then, of course, the central characters, and finally, their seven- or eight-year-old child, who—significance, significance!—gets the last line.

K.H.: Ah, which is—?

G.G.: —which is, “Mummy, what’s up-to-date people?” [“Mama, was sind das, moderne Menschen?”]

[MUSIC: Schoenberg, *Von heute auf morgen*, Op. 32/last seven minutes, Erika Schmidt, Derrik Olsen, Herbert Schachtschneider, and Heather Harper, singers; Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Robert Craft.]

G.G.: And thus endeth *Von heute von morgen*!

K.H.: Hmm ... By the way, with all of those art-by-committee attributions—you know, Noël Coward and friends—you never did mention who was responsible for the libretto.

G.G.: Officially, an otherwise unknown dramatist by the name of “Max Blonda.”

K.H.: Really? And unofficially?

G.G.: Well, according to usually reliable sources (as they say at the Pentagon), Mrs. Gertrud Schoenberg.

K.H.: Ah! What? Now, let me get this straight: Are you saying that Schoenberg’s wife wrote his librettos under a pseudonym?

G.G.: Well, not his librettos in toto, just this one in particular.

K.H.: Ah. But why? I mean, why did she choose to conceal her participation in the project?

G.G.: I haven’t the slightest idea, Ken, unless the subject itself, perhaps—

K.H.: Oh, infidelity, you mean?

G.G.: Right—unless it cut a bit close to the quick, so to speak.

K.H.: Oh, are you suggesting that Schoenberg himself had a roving eye and that the plot of *Von heute auf morgen* reflected Schoenberg’s own domestic situation?

G.G.: No, I find the whole episode appropriately mysterious. I’m just suggesting that that might have been one possible explanation. Matter of fact, I did have occasion, some twelve years ago, I think, and hence about a decade after Schoenberg’s death, to interview

the late Frau Gertrud [for his 1962 CBC radio documentary *Arnold Schoenberg: The Man Who Changed Music*]. Needless to say, the subject of her alleged activities as a librettist played no part in the conversation, but the impression I got from that conversation was that her role—posthumously, at any rate—had become that of custodian of the faith, you know. She was very anxious to assure me that Schoenberg was really a gentle, generous, unassuming, misunderstood burgher who just happened to make a modest livelihood labouring in the twelve-tone vineyards. [They laugh.]

K.H.: Can we have a sample comment?

G.G.: Indeed we can. You're also going to hear—because that's the way we edited the material at the time—two other voices belonging respectively to Aaron Copland and to a friend of mine, a psychiatrist [and violinist and future Gould biographer], Peter Ostwald, who knew Schoenberg in a social as opposed to a professional context. Please, Kenneth, do bear in mind that this sequence was created twelve years ago, that the interviews were



The American soprano Jessye Norman in a scene from the Metropolitan Opera's 1988-89 production of Schoenberg's monodrama *Erwartung*, in New York. (Photograph by the Metropolitan Opera.)



Top: John Tomlinson, in the speaking (non-singing) role of Moses, with the burning bush, at the beginning of Act 1 of Schoenberg's *Moses and Aaron*. Bottom: An image from Act 2/Scene 3. (Photographs by Ken Howard, from the Metropolitan Opera's 2003-04 production, in New York.)

done on location, and that the whole is available only in glorious mono [sound].

K.H.: [laughing] Never mind the excuses, sir. My favourite Beethoven-symphony edition is still the Felix Weingartner set—

G.G.: Oh, good for you—mine, too.

K.H.: —and I'm quite capable of listening with archival interests to the fore.

G.G.: Splendid.



GERTRUD SCHOENBERG: He never had this kind of entourage [of the kind that] people of mind and of influence have, usually. He was always alone. Even in Berlin, we had perhaps four, five people coming, and that's all. We didn't have *any* friends. When we came [to the United States] the only person we knew in Hollywood was a Mr. [Hugo] Riesenfeld, who was also Viennese, who came here and had all the [silent-movie] theatres—you know, with those big orchestras they had [in the twenties], in New York—and [later] he lost his whole money, and he came to Hollywood to write movie [music]. And after that, he heard about Schoenberg being stranded in Pasadena, and not getting a house there, because we had a child and this was [equivalent to] murder in Pasadena. So he came right away and took us to Hollywood. But we had nobody here, and he really came especially for his health; [it was] only much later [that] he got an offer to teach, in S.C. [the University of Southern California] first and then in U.C.L.A. [the University of California at Los Angeles]. It is one of those strange coincidences in his life that the people who were renowned at that time never wanted to meet him. They had an awe; they were afraid of meeting him. But Schoenberg loved to talk with people of some kind of intelligence, and this he missed always, I must say.

GLENN GOULD: One man who did attempt to meet Schoenberg was the American composer Aaron Copland.

AARON COPLAND: We had, Schoenberg and I, a brief incident, which seems rather amusing in retrospect, [but] which I didn't enjoy very much at the time it was happening, because it put me in the position of being anti-Schoenbergian in his mind, which I certainly wasn't; as a matter of fact, I think I was probably one of the first people in the United States to give public lectures on Schoenberg in the mid-twenties, and I always did my best to present his work as fairly as I could. In fact, [laughing] I went so far as to play one of the Op. 11 piano pieces. He somehow had the impression, during the last years of his life, that people were trying to prevent his music from being played. It must have been a very difficult experience to be a man of Schoenberg's gifts and his actual production and to watch conductors, year after year, programming pieces by men he knew did not have the value of himself. And so, in the end, it really got under his skin, and he felt that men like [the conductors] Toscanini and Koussevitzky were

against him. And for some reason or other, I must have somehow gotten into that crowd of people. At any rate, he thought I was against him, and he wrote a letter that was published in the column that [the American composer] Virgil Thomson wrote each Sunday in the *New York Herald Tribune*, in which he combined my name with others who were attempting to (as he put it) stop his career, or get in the way of his career. So I hastened to write a letter back to the *Tribune*, pointing out that I wasn't in any sense against his career, that I was an admirer of what he had done, and so forth. And, in the end, we did have a personal exchange of letters in which he indicated that someone had been telling him things about me that he was glad to hear were not so. So it had a happy end. But in my mind it gave me the sense that he must have had a feeling of being persecuted, actually; whether he was in fact persecuted or not, he had that feeling.

G.S.: He was very straightforward. He was the kind of man who never showed off at all. And he could just have been a simple merchant, too, when you talked with him of ordinary things. Publicity was not done for him at all, and people in Vienna said, "It's a crazy man. Let's not associate with him," you know. And we never know: Should we say yes to what he's thinking or shouldn't we, rather, omit it? We always have time to come in. Now, also those people all were of a quite different social standing: they all had money, they all had their securities, they were hesitant, you know. And when he met somebody, *he* was always the one who gave much more and was happy, and then he got a knock on his head.

A.C.: He was a very curious mentality, it seems to me, not at all my kind of person, if I were thinking of him purely as a human being, not a man I would naturally want to spend an evening with. I like someone more humanist, let's say. He was probably very humanist in his spirit; I'm sure he was. But there was a kind of fanatic thing at the very bottom of his core, which you could not argue with. I remember once meeting him and either he asked me what I was writing or in some way it turned out that I had been just writing a ballet. Well, he took a very dim view of ballets; ballets were not things that interested him. It didn't seem a serious art form, and he made no bones about telling me that. I knew that I'd hear something like that—I didn't know quite what—but at any rate it seems to me that it typified the man as a man. I don't think of him as a solid citizen [laughing] who can be followed in everything that he says and does. It isn't necessary that a great man like Schoenberg should be a solid citizen; it's just that if you're going to spend an evening with a man you sort of don't get anywhere if you can't get the sense you're going to in some way change his thinking. Naturally you can sit at his feet like a disciple and listen; that would be extremely instructive; but it's not quite the same thing as exchanging ideas with a reasonable human being. [laughs]

G.G.: One American who did spend and enjoy an evening with Schoenberg was the San Francisco psychiatrist Dr. Peter Ostwald. In 1948, Dr. Ostwald was a student of Schoenberg's at the Music Academy of the West, in Santa Barbara, California.

PETER OSTWALD: The only time I saw him at home, so to speak, without a formal class setting, was one evening when he invited those of us who were interested in chamber music over to his house to listen to records of his quartets. At that time, the quartets had not been issued in this country, or at least not in any modern recording, so this was a rare opportunity to become acquainted with his music. And I think he was quite restrained. He certainly didn't put on any airs of being a prophet or a professor or anything like that. He was quite humble, and Viennese, in a way—you know, wanting to make everyone comfortable and be sure that they enjoyed the evening. He didn't strike me as a stern person. He had, at that time, two sons, one about five and the other about seven, and a daughter who was about thirteen, and considering what an old man he was—really, old enough to be their grandfather or great-grandfather—he seemed very kind and thoughtful. He was too ill, I think, at that time, to play with them very much, but he seemed very considerate. One got more the impression, though, that all efforts were made to be kind to *him*. Both the children and his wife seemed terribly concerned always about him. He was very fragile, he was constantly having asthmatic attacks and would have to pull out a kind of adrenaline spray and medicate himself, so it was difficult perhaps for him to be as supportive and understanding towards others as it would have been the other way around. One may have thought that he was stern from his demeanour and behaviour, rather. Well, he *looked* stern, in a sense. At that time, anyway, he was thin and quite wrinkled, and even though he had one of those very luscious Hollywood tans one could see there the fading aspects of a man. And this may have given him a kind of stern appearance. But he didn't speak in a stern way. If you've heard recordings of his voice you would see he had a rather *high-pitched* voice, halting and not at all stern.

G.G.: Another Californian and expatriat German who was not at all sure about his affection for Schoenberg at this period was the novelist Thomas Mann. Mann had been an occasional visitor at the Schoenberg home during the war years and there seems to have existed an exchange of letters in which Schoenberg asked to be given reasonable credit for the introduction of [a variant of his twelve-tone] system [in Mann's novel *Doktor Faustus*], to which Thomas Mann responded by a rather tersely worded second-printing announcement, something to the effect that the twelve-tone system described in Chapter Something-Or-Other is actually the invention of Arnold Schoenberg, a contemporary composer and theoretician. To this, Schoenberg responded by renouncing their friendship.

G.S.: When Thomas Mann came here, he invited him, and he was very happy to talk to an intelligent and great man, and we got quite friendly. But the level the talk went was not really the level it should go, and I can prove that by telling you that after he was at our place and Schoenberg talked with him about music and everything, the only thing he wrote in his little diary was that he got a very good coffee from Mrs. Schoenberg. So, this is my point, you know. People *didn't* approach him like they should do.

P.O.: I can only clearly recall one time that he spent a lecture on his own music, and I believe he used exactly the same approach to his



Gould at the lectern and the piano, delivering one of the inaugural Corbett Music Lectures at the University of Cincinnati, on 22 April 1963. This lecture was published by the university the following year, as the monograph *Arnold Schoenberg: A Perspective*. (Photographs by Graumann Marks.)

own music that he did to the works of Beethoven that he analyzed, and one Brahms symphony, I think, [that] he analyzed. There didn't seem to be much difference at all. It was my impression that he considered himself in many ways an Old Master capable of the same kind of thorough-going musical analysis that he applied to the other Old Masters. I really am not sure now how much he said about it, but in general I would think that he would occasionally acknowledge that a particular moment in the piece was quite moving, or beautifully worked out, successful. I don't think he commented in a negative way about himself.





KEN HASLAM: Fascinating memorabilia, Glenn.

GLENN GOULD: It is, indeed.

K.H.: But I can't escape the impression that you've rather short-changed the representation of Schoenberg's operatic works thus far. I mean, after all, you allowed us about—what?—seven minutes from *Von heute auf morgen*, and perhaps, oh, two minutes and change from *Moses and Aaron*, and—

G.G.: Well, the accusation is not entirely unfounded, sir. I guess I don't really think of Schoenberg as a man of the theatre, primarily. You know, it's an old saw, but it's true nonetheless, that Schoenberg was more or less equal parts Brahms and Wagner, in terms of influence, and that, certainly in his later years, the Brahmsian strain—

K.H.: The anti-theatrical, pro-symphonic strain?

G.G.: Exactly—was predominant. I seriously doubt whether, even in his early years when the Wagnerian influence was paramount, whether Schoenberg could have arrived at any concoction as

indigenously theatrical as [Berg's opera] *Wozzeck*, for example.

K.H.: Yeah, which is certainly the one great operatic success granted composers of the Schoenbergian persuasion.

G.G.: No question about that, yeah. No, I doubt that he could have arrived at that, because his bent, even at that time—in the *Gurrelieder*, for example—was really towards oratorio, or at any rate towards some sort of declamatory, tract-like statement, which is, of course, exactly what *Moses and Aaron* really is.

K.H.: Well, now, I know that the featured work on this program is *Erwartung*, which, of course, properly speaking, isn't an opera at all.

G.G.: No, it isn't. But I think that, first of all, it is probably the most effectively theatrical work Schoenberg ever devised. And perhaps there's no coincidence in the fact that it is a monodrama, a work for one character only. But it's also, of course, one of his very greatest musical scores—in a sense, indeed, the most radical score he ever wrote, though I don't mean to suggest that its greatness and its radical elements are analogous. It's stream-of-consciousness music, really, almost entirely devoid of repetition—motivic repetition, that is. It's really the ultimate embodiment of Schoenberg's mid-period theories about perpetual motivic evolution.

K.H.: And what about the text, Glenn?

G.G.: The text is by Marie Pappenheim, and is as convolutedly Freudian as is the dream-logic of the music itself. It's about a woman, wandering through a forest, in search of her friend, lover, husband, whatever—

K.H.: Well, the text is deliberately vague, then, I gather, right?

G.G.: Indeed it is—in the interests of symbolic intent, I'm sure. Anyway, in the climactic scene, she stumbles upon his body and it becomes reasonably clear to us, though perhaps not to her, that she herself has been responsible for his demise. And the piece ends, prophetically enough, for her, for Schoenberg's music, and for the era in which he wrote *Erwartung* [in 1909], with the words, "Ich suchte."

K.H.: "I searched."

G.G.: Right.

K.H.: Let's hear it. 🎧

[MUSIC: Schoenberg, *Erwartung* [expectation],
Op. 17. Helga Pilarczyk, soprano;
Orchestra of the Opera Society of Washington,
conducted by Robert Craft.]



The Schoenberg Series

Part 8

The Transcriber: Schoenberg and the Past

[MUSIC: Schoenberg, Cello Concerto in D Major
(after Monn). Chicago Symphony Orchestra,
conducted by Robert Craft.
Music continues in the background ...]

ANNOUNCER ... As usual, Glenn Gould is on hand to allay the apprehensions of Kenneth Haslam, and, on this occasion, to introduce to him Schoenberg's orchestral realization of a piano quartet by Brahms, an organ prelude by Bach, and a mystery item currently on the turntable and to the identification of which Mr. Haslam's deductive powers will be tested in twenty questions or less.

KEN HASLAM: Twenty questions, indeed. [The announcer] George McLean has got to go!

Schoenberg (right) in Berlin, with his pupil and friend Anton Webern, ca. 1926-29. (© Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna.)

GLENN GOULD: I always thought you shared my passion for guessing games, Kenneth.

K.H.: Oh, well, I do, Glenn, at home in the living room, or even in the studio with the mike off, but not when I'm required to go into my Jeanne Dixon [psychic] act live and in stereo. [They laugh.]

G.G.: You prefer to make your prognosticatory gaffes monaurally, sir?

K.H.: Well, I'd prefer that you simply identify this mixed-up

concoction in the background and get on with the program.

G.G.: Well, why don't we raise it to the foreground for a moment so that you can benefit from some sonic clues.

[MUSIC: The volume of the music is raised briefly, then lowered again ...]

K.H.: Well, er, OK, an idea dawns ...

G.G.: I was sure it would.

K.H.: Yeah. The soloist is obviously a cellist.

G.G.: Right.

K.H.: And I seem to remember that Schoenberg did dabble in some adaptation or other for that instrument.

G.G.: So far so good. You may now pass "GO" and collect a further clue: the original was a keyboard concerto.

K.H.: Ah, well, it's obviously some sort of rewrite of an obscure nineteenth-century piano piece, but I haven't a clue as to the original author.

G.G.: Well, that's understandable, because you won't find the original author in the nineteenth century.

K.H.: Oh, really?

G.G.: Would you believe it if I told you that Bach was still alive when that skeleton which Schoenberg is attempting to flesh out was put on paper?

K.H.: Well, I believe you, but I can hardly believe my ears. I would have thought that Schoenberg would have manifested a genuine concern for the past and not sort of mucked about drawing moustaches on musical Mona Lisas. Who was the original author?

G.G.: Matthias Georg Monn [1717-1750]. The source was a harpsichord concerto [in D major] written in 1746, and Schoenberg provided the hirsute decorations in 1932 [and 1933].

K.H.: And the only possibly question that remains is: Why?

G.G.: And a good one it is.

K.H.: Well, I mean, I know that, whereas you were once a hard-liner in regard to transcriptions, whatever the genre, you've mellowed considerably in recent years, Glenn. Your own piano transcriptions of Wagner are surely evidence of that, or your recording of the Beethoven-Liszt Fifth Symphony.

G.G.: Right. And I think I told you once before, Ken, my feeling is that *literal* representation should not be the object of a transcription. My Wagner transcriptions are far from literal, actually: I added voices whenever Wagner settled in for prolonged spells with a pedal-point; I "corrected" (if I may use that word) Wagner's voice-leading in spots where, given the original instrumentation, the combination of a generous ear and orchestral colour could make one overlook the musical equivalent of a dangling participle. But what Schoenberg is up to—and I'm still avoiding your pertinent "Why?"—is something quite different.

K.H.: Well, surely it's not unrelated to what Stravinsky did to Pergolesi [and other composers] in *Pulcinella*?

G.G.: Not unrelated, certainly, but I don't think that the "wrong-note" syndrome of *Pulcinella* is really much in evidence here. As you know, Ken, Stravinsky's rococo rewrites send me up the wall, literally. Strauss's, on the other hand—I'm thinking of his Couperin arrangements, or the Lully conversions in [his incidental music for Molière's play] *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*—I find, on the whole, rather charming. And when he—Strauss—turned his talent to simulated eighteenth-century settings, as in much of *Bourgeois [gentilhomme]* or in [his last opera] *Capriccio*, I just melt completely, because it's completely obvious to me that Strauss was deeply in love with eighteenth-century themes, settings, plots, and harmony.

K.H.: And in Schoenberg's case?

G.G.: Well, in Schoenberg's case, the only word that comes to mind is ... "sad." I think the transcriptions and the rewrites, with one exception, which we'll get to a little bit later, reveal a total lack of sympathy for the eighteenth-century musical milieu. Schoenberg said once that he believed that all Baroque music should be enriched by elaborating the continuo [i.e., accompanimental] aspects of the score. I don't think anyone would disagree with that. But his realizations simply involve rather conventional, occasionally quirky, late-nineteenth-century progressions which are simply counterproductive vis-à-vis the melodic conceits at hand.

K.H.: Yeah, well, of course, it's also the orchestral trappings involved. You know, I mean, the percussion battery seems to be out in full force.

G.G.: True. But, mind you, [the contemporary Soviet composer Rodion Konstantinovich] Shchedrin pulled off an ultra-percussive [one-act arrangement of Bizet's opera] *Carmen* [in 1968], which is at least a pleasant divertissement, and actually makes a point or two about the music at hand.

K.H.: Yeah, true.

G.G.: The difference, of course, obviously, is that Shchedrin had a fund of humour at his command and Schoenberg, quite frankly, did not. I think the fact is that Schoenberg, for all his foresight, had very limited hindsight.



Gould with Bruno Monsaingeon (in checked shirt and glasses) and his crew during production of the four-part portrait of Gould that Monsaingeon made for the ORTF (French television) series *Chemins de la musique*. The film was shot early in 1974, in Toronto, before Gould began working on his Schoenberg series, and first aired, in France, at the end of that year.

[MUSIC: Schoenberg's Cello Concerto comes to an end in the background.]

I don't think he was materially different in that respect from most artists of his generation, you know—from the "If Bach had had it he would have used it" school. And speaking of Bach, if you want to hear a genuine monstrosity, allow me to play you forty-five seconds or less of Schoenberg's transcription of the "St. Anne" Prelude [in E-flat Major, for organ, BWV 552], which is guaranteed to make you reappraise the Stokowski Bach orchestrations as the models of taste and discernment they comparatively are. [They laugh.]

[MUSIC: Opening of the Bach-Schoenberg "St. Anne" Prelude. Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Robert Craft. Music continues in the background ...]

K.H.: That's an atrocity!

G.G.: My sentiments exactly. But imagine the effect in Radio City Music Hall, sir!

K.H.: You still haven't answered my first question.

G.G.: "Why?"

K.H.: "Why?" indeed.

G.G.: Well, Ken, I think the "Why?" of the matter is at least partly explained by the period in which these pieces were written. The Bach transcriptions—and Schoenberg adapted both the prelude and fugue of the "St. Anne," as well as some Bach chorale preludes—stem from the 1920s.

K.H.: And the significance of that?

G.G.: The significance of that, I think, is that those were years which witnessed Schoenberg's first, very tentative efforts in twelve-tone compositions, and the preceding decade had seen no completed works at all.

[MUSIC: The Bach-Schoenberg "St. Anne" Prelude comes to an end in the background.]

I think Schoenberg was tonality-hungry, as, indeed, he was always in his life. And I think these transcriptions (or whatever they are) brought him momentarily in touch with tonality, you know. Well, you have to remember, of course, that for Schoenberg tonality meant

nineteenth-century chromaticism, essentially, not eighteenth-century diatonicism, and I don't really think that Schoenberg was historian enough to escape from, or even to momentarily step outside of, his own preconceptions.

K.H.: Well, now, I know that we have an historian as guest on today's program—

G.G.: We do, indeed: [the British musicologist] Denis Stevens, who is equipped not only musicologically—he's taught at Columbia University in New York for many years—but who is also a distinguished choral conductor.

K.H.: Yeah. And his views on the transcriptions?

G.G.: We really didn't talk about *them* at any length. I guess what I wanted to find out from him (if I may paraphrase the Watergate Senate Committee) was, in terms of historical concepts, What did Arnold Schoenberg know, and when did he know it?



DENIS STEVENS: I think the point about Schoenberg's view of history is the fact that he grew up in a city—in Vienna—that was tremendously conscious of its past. Of course, it is still conscious, and, until very recent years, you could hardly hear any music in Vienna apart from the music of their own composers. I recall at one time giving a concert of Baroque Italian music there, and it seemed very normal repertory as far as we were concerned, but for the Viennese it was totally new. They were used to their diet of Schubert and Bruckner and Brahms and so on. And I think that, even in Schoenberg's time, perhaps more so, there was this element of the traditional that was enormously ingrown, and I suppose partly due to that he became the composer that he was: forward-looking, independent, and absolutely original.

He wrote to Webern at some time and said—apropos of some lectures on twelve-tone music—he said, "I would recommend your possibly arranging the analyses in such a way, by choice of works, as to show the logical development towards twelve-tone composition. Thus, the Netherlands School and Bach for counterpoint; Mozart for phrasing, but also for handling of motives; then Beethoven, but also Bach, for development; Brahms, and possibly Mahler, for varied and complex treatment." Well, that's one view of his backward-looking idea of history, which, as I say, was *not* academic, although it was very, very tied up with the possibilities of historical performance. There again Vienna was to the fore. And I think that all the Viennese feel this. Don't you?

GLENN GOULD: I'm sure they do, or did. But I've often wondered if it's sensible to attempt any sort of correlation between the sense that Schoenberg obviously had of himself as inheritor of the Viennese tradition, the sense he had of a line—you know: Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Wagner—a line that found, in *him*, its logical culmination, and the intense preoccupation he had, on the other hand, with internal permutations, his preoccupation with perpetual extension of motives in a work, for instance.



The opening of J. S. Bach's "St. Anne" Prelude in E-flat Major, BWV 552, as it appeared in the original edition of the third part of his *Clavier Übung* [keyboard exercise], a collection of organ pieces published by Bach himself, in Leipzig, in 1739. The prelude appears at the beginning of this collection, its companion fugue at the end.

In other words, is this a silly question, or can one reasonably correlate his *extra-musical* sense of historical development, in effect, and the preoccupation with it, with his internal processes of musical organization?

D.S.: I seem to remember something of that in a general way. It's quoted by, I believe, [the French-born Greek-English critic and musicologist Michel Dimitri] Calvocoressi, in a study called "The Classicism of Arnold Schoenberg." And he quotes the composer as saying, "What I know I have learned from thorough study of the music of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, and Brahms." And, incidentally, they're the ones you've just named, so there must be something in this linking of the man with those Germanic predecessors. Regarding the detailed part of your question, I'm not so sure about that. I believe that somewhere in *Style and Idea* [a collection, in English, of Schoenberg's writings] he raised several objections to neo-Classicism. Well, he objected to the kind of neo-Classicism that possessed very few really new elements. For example, he disliked the use of pedal-points, preferring elaborate bass parts, moving harmony. He disliked ostinatos and sequences; instead, he preferred developing variation. He also didn't like

fugatos or dissonances of the kind that merely disguised the vulgarity of the thematic material. And he also hated the kind of polyphony that he called "not true counterpoint." If you remember that cantata of his — was it 1925? — "Der neue Klassizismus" [from *Three Satires*, Op. 28] — he wrote his own libretto to that, I think — and at one point, I remember, the bass sings, "The components of art operate according to the letters of the alphabet," to which the soprano and alto reply, "If one *knows* his alphabet." Which gets us a little down to detail.

G.G.: Yeah, well, the alphabet that Schoenberg knew in 1925 was a twelve-tone alphabet, after all, and it *was* used, despite his objections to neo-Classicism, in what was essentially a neo-Classical environment, it seems to me. I don't mean that as a criticism, only as a comment. I've often thought that the first twelve-tone things are just about the *only* pieces in which Schoenberg evidences a real sense of humour, which is a kind of funny quality for them to evidence in view of their exploratory nature. But, I mean, the *Musette*, for instance, in the Piano Suite [Op. 25], with its incessant tritones in the left hand, in lieu of the Rameau-style pedal-points — I mean, I think that's really a very, very funny piece.

D.S.: That's a delightful one, yes, indeed. [They laugh.]

G.G.: I think it's hysterical, actually, to tell you the truth!

D.S.: What one wonders is why he didn't break *completely* with the past. Why *did* he go back to the eighteenth century? I think he might have referred to eighteenth-century forms in order to compensate for the (at that time) incomprehensibility of twelve-tone music.

G.G.: Yeah, I think you're absolutely right. Let me ask you one of those really dumb, impossible-to-answer questions that I adore to put to people, and upset them with. Given the fact that Schoenberg viewed himself as the "mantle-ee" [i.e., inheritor] of the Viennese tradition, is it likely that when one looks back at Schoenberg's life over a great distance—let's say a hundred years from now, two hundred, three hundred, whatever—that people are going to say, Well, you know, this was an interesting character, but he was one of those quirky characters in history like Gesualdo, who sort of stepped out of the frame of his period, and formulated certain inventions that were of great theoretical interest at the time, but have been shown to have had no real development subsequently; they became a kind of backwater, very much in the sense that Gesualdo became a sort of backwater. Is there any sense in which Schoenberg could be viewed as an historical freak, in effect?

D.S.: Well, if the question is, if one looks at Schoenberg's theories from a very, very long distance in the future, whether we would find a simply a leading-away-into-nowhere, or whether they make some really lasting impression, whether this can be compared with the rather odd characters—you mentioned one, like Gesualdo—and so on: I could say that this is certainly a very, very valid succession of events in the historical continuum. This whole question of tradition in music, which we're concerned about so much with Schoenberg, keeps recurring, because composers have come to me and said, "Look, what do we do nowadays if he want to organize our works? How can we possibly reproduce something like Medieval isorhythm?" So I said, "Well, why not just use it? And I persuaded an English composer called Anthony Milner to make extensive use of isorhythm in a large-scale choral-orchestral work, and I think it came off very well. So one finds, from time to time, this willingness on the part of contemporary composers to subject themselves to a kind of discipline that was perhaps unknown since 1600 or even 1500.

G.G.: Yeah, well, of course, that brings up a whole other thing, because I think it's fair to say that, despite Schoenberg's preoccupation with Western music circa 1600-1900 or something of the sort, that for a lot of younger musicians today it's almost as if the processes in which they want to get involved are processes that predate even the *late-Renaissance* experience of music. I mean, it seems to me that the rhythmic parameters, for instance, of serialism are really nothing more than an updating of [Medieval] isorhythmic devices, as you've already suggested, and these are rhythmic parameters that all loyal graduates of Princeton go into ecstasies about, or have been doing for the last twenty

years. So that obviously there is some sense in which the whole post-Renaissance experience is being bypassed in the new music. Would you agree with that?

D.S.: One finds it first of all, I think, in the fourteenth-century—*late-fourteenth-century*—French composers, who experimented with notation in such a complex way that the works are very, very difficult to perform even now. And I'd far rather tackle some of the music of the [Second] Viennese School than some of those late-fourteenth-century French compositions, because the notation is so fantastic, and even if you can transcribe it, you still don't get the feeling, the rhythmic feeling, of the original notation, which is often red and blue and black and so on, or black-void or red-void. It carries with it rhythmic undercurrents that are extremely difficult to grasp. And this was obviously a kind of private group, a synod, and they just performed each other's compositions, and they were as abstruse and complicated as they wanted to be; no one interfered with them. But what it did lead to was the clarity that followed of the music of Dufay and Dunstable; it's been called "pan-consonant," "pan-harmonic," and so on, but it was a total change. You find also with Gesualdo, to move on to the next historical example—Gesualdo and his contemporary Nenna, to some extent Vincentino—extraordinary experiments in chromaticism, which they achieve by different manners. I mean, the Vincentino idea was simply to use chords in root position but which were totally unrelated; they're always in root position but they're completely out of phase, you see. But the third relationship, the triad relationship, is also vastly important, because I believe that this, too, recurs at various points in history. One striking example, I think, is that in the Purcell set of twelve trio sonatas, they're so planned that there's a third relationship in the actual keys.

G.G.: I'm very glad you said that, because, you know, we've talked at various times during the particular [CBC radio] series on Schoenberg about Schoenberg's so-called "concessions" to tonality in his later years, which, in my view, were not really concessions at all, of course. But I do believe there was a whole new method he developed in works like the *Ode to Napoleon*, in which that triadic aspect, which you already related to the late Renaissance, does recur in a curious fashion, and in a fashion that could only exist because of his experience with twelve-tone music. You know, whole new tonal connectives, adjoined triads that normally would not be joined. Does that make any sense to you?

D.S.: One that comes to mind immediately is, I think, Prelude to Act 3 of [the opera] *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, of Benjamin Britten, which I believe is a strictly twelve-tone opening but has a kind of pan-consonant sound. So this kind of thing can happen. So I think that there again the practical outlook of the composer ties in with his theoretical ideas. And, moving on to the next example, which is Schoenberg, one finds the same kind of thing. He was a self-taught man, but he was in many ways a practical musician. He knew what was expected of him as a composer, and he never wrote things that were utterly impossible.



The Schoenberg Series

Part 9

The Teacher: Schoenberg and the Future

[MUSIC: John Cage, unidentified music for solo double bass. Music continues in the background until the beginning of the Cage interview.]

ANNOUNCER: The music of Arnold Schoenberg. Er, well, to be precise, this is not, at the moment, the music of Arnold Schoenberg, but rather the music of John Cage, this week's special guest on the program called *The Music of Arnold Schoenberg*—or, perhaps more accurately, on the program called *Music of Today*, which for the ninth and penultimate week features music by Arnold Schoenberg, and which also features Glenn Gould in conversation with Ken Haslam, who will undertake to answer any further questions you may have on the subject.

KEN HASLAM: Well, for once I have to agree [with the announcer]

Schoenberg teaching in Los Angeles in the 1940s.
(© Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna.)

George McLean, Glenn. I do think that an explanation is in order, because this is probably the most improbable bit of casting in which you've indulged thus far.

GLENN GOULD: Cage on Schoenberg? Well, you know, Ken, I have a confession to make. I wrote to John Cage some months back, told him about the series, which was at that time on the drawing-boards, and said that, since we'd probably be inundated with the opinions of tried-and-true Schoenbergians, I thought that we should give adequate, if not necessarily equal, time to the most notable devil's advocate we could find.

K.H: Ah-ha. And, of course, you cast him in that role.

G.G: I did, yes. But—best-laid plans and all that sort of thing—interview intentions have a happy faculty of coming back to haunt the interviewer on occasion, as you well know.

K.H: [laughing] Well, now, you're not going to tell me that John Cage heads up his local chapter of the Schoenberg Admiration Society?

G.G: Well, I think he's too discriminating in his enthusiasms to air his likes and dislikes on his sleeve. Also, I have the impression that he's much too gentle an individual to speak disparagingly of a colleague. But he did study with Schoenberg, after all, and, you know—

K.H: What? ... Oh, wait a minute, Glenn. John Cage studied with Arnold Schoenberg?

G.G: Oh, yeah, of course he did. I assumed you knew that, Ken.

K.H: No, I didn't! That's the most unlikely bit of casting yet!

G.G: Well, now, that's one of the reasons for my determination to include his interview on this series, because his career is not necessarily that of the prototypical Schoenberg disciple, one might say.

K.H: Yeah, well, that's putting it mildly, indeed. I mean, after all, John Cage, as I understand it, has refuted by his writings, and certainly in his music, virtually everything that Schoenberg stood for.

G.G: That's absolutely true.

K.H: Uh-huh. I mean, Cage was an early advocate of free improvisation—

G.G: —of aleatoric music, absolutely.

K.H: Yeah—and of electronic music also, wasn't he?

G.G: Right again—and long before tape technology became available, too. He used variable-speed turntables and things like that back in the thirties. And then, of course, in the fifties, he programmed (if I can mis-apply that word) the first "happening." For that matter, the quasi-astrological, *I Ching*-ian music of his later years is really a sort of protracted happening, isn't it?

K.H: Well, exactly. But would it not be fair to say that all of these Cagean innovations relate in some way to his fascination with—well, what would you call it?—noise for noise's sake, perhaps?

G.G: I think that's close enough, yeah.

K.H: Well, then, let me say it again, Glenn: I just can't imagine why a musician who holds such, er—

G.G: Anarchistic views?

K.H: Right. I can't imagine why such a musician would choose to study with someone like Schoenberg, who, as I've come to realize in the course of our conversations during this series, was, for all of his own efforts at innovation, a real traditionalist, you know, in terms of—oh—the respect for the past, perhaps, and certainly in terms of the proprieties of music making.

G.G: No, I agree with everything you've said, Ken. It's intriguing that Cage *would* have elected to study with Schoenberg, and, as I said, the interview was a real surprise for me, too. I was quite prepared to find Cage possessed of a tolerance, a sort of live-and-let-live philosophy, *qua* Schoenberg, but I really was *not* prepared for the genuinely sympathetic appraisal that he offered of Schoenberg's historical position. And I think that sympathy is not without significance, because Cage is probably—I think this is a fair thing to say—he's probably the only American composer who's had any major degree of influence on the European music scene. I don't mean the only composer who's appreciated on the Continent, or admired as a craftsman, or whatever.

K.H: Yeah, but as a sort of guru.

G.G: Exactly, yeah. And there's a fascinating contradiction in that, too, because Cage is, in many ways, the compleat American primitive, you know, a sort of musical Thoreau, really. And yet, the people on whom his influence has been felt most profoundly have been people like Karlheinz Stockhausen, for instance, who started *his* musical career as the very embodiment of [with a German accent] systematized, super-organized, Central European *Musik* making, [normal voice] but who has gradually and—admittedly while applying absurdly Germanic and quasi-intellectual rationalizations to explain away the metamorphosis involved—changed his spots, so to speak, and has supered upon serialism, and all the other Continental mechanisms which he utilized at the beginning of his career, aspects of the Cagean musical philosophy. So, mind you, I think that Cage's real influence, as you've suggested, was—*is*, indeed—that of a guru. I think his influence stemmed primarily, however, from his *ideas* about music, about the composer's role, about concepts of improvisation, indeterminacy, as you've mentioned, of compositorial anonymity, and so on—and above all, of course, about concepts involving an overlap of Eastern and Western philosophies of sound. I think it's the *ideas* that have made him a welcome figure on the European scene, rather than his music *per se*, perhaps.

K.H: Ah-ha. Well, now, exactly. After all, didn't he write a work—if that's the word for it, Glenn—consisting entirely of silence? [They laugh.]

G.G: Well, I don't know if that's the word for it—"work," I mean—but he did, indeed. It's called *4'33"*, and it's a piece, er, "score" for which consists of four minutes and thirty-three seconds of total silence. And needless to say, the instrumentation is optional. [They laugh.] But of course, even in his *extended*

pieces, which are intended to be heard, to some extent, rather than just thought about, Cage isn't so much constructing musical works, really, as sending out probes, as Mr. McLuhan would say.

K.H: Now, that's really my point, Glenn. The Western notion of music doesn't—well, or anyway *didn't*—have anything much to do with “probes” or whatever. It had to do with a continuum of sound, and I still can't fathom why a man who espouses such ideas would have studied with Arnold Schoenberg.

G.G: Well, now that you've come full circle with the question, shall we let him tell us why?

K.H: I'm all ears.



JOHN CAGE: Well, what had happened was that, during the Depression, I found myself a place to live in Santa Monica that had a large room over the garages at the back. It corresponded to what would now be called a motel but then was called an “auto court.” And I went from house to house in Santa Monica—I was enthusiastic about modern music and about modern painting—and I went from house to house and I told the people who answered the doorbell that I would give ten lectures on modern music and modern painting for two dollars and a half, and that I knew nothing about the subject but that I was enthusiastic about it, and that each week I would learn as much as I could about the subject of the next week's talk. And in this way I made for myself a survey of modern painting and of modern music. I had spent a year and a half in Europe previously, and it was there that I came in contact with both.

And the time came for the lecture on Schoenberg, and at that time, in the early thirties, there were no recordings of his music, so that—well, it's a long story, but—I had read somewhere that Richard Buhlig, the pianist, had been the first to play the Op. 11 [piano pieces] of Schoenberg. And I had always considered myself a fairly lucky person, so I thought, Well, Buhlig is probably living in Los Angeles. And I took out the phonebook and there, of course, was his name. And I called him up and said that I would like to hear him play the Op. 11 of Schoenberg, and he said he wasn't giving a concert, and I said, “Would you play it for me?” and he said, “Certainly not.” Well, I didn't meet him then, but when the time for my lecture about Schoenberg came, I decided to present myself. So I hitchhiked from Santa Monica to Los Angeles to his house and I rang the doorbell. There was no reply. I stood in front of the house for twelve hours, and finally he returned at midnight, and he was with a lady, and they had been at some Bach festival, I believe. And they were frightened, of course, to see me suddenly come out of the dark. And I said, “I've been waiting for you for twelve hours.” And somehow I convinced Buhlig that he should see me. And eventually he gave me instruction, and I managed to play the Minuet of [Schoenberg's Suite] Op.—it's Op. 25, isn't it? And this is a long introduction, but through having to give all those lectures, each week, I decided that of all the modern music I preferred that of Schoenberg.

[MUSIC: Schoenberg, opening of No. 3 from the *Klavierstücke* [piano pieces], Op. 11. Glenn Gould, piano (1958 Columbia Masterworks recording). Music fades out as interview continues.]

I should mention something else that led me to Schoenberg as a student. After working for a while with Buhlig, who was a piano teacher—he was not a composition teacher, but I persuaded him to teach me as much composition as he could—I devised, because of my interest in Schoenberg's music, I devised not a twelve-tone row, but a *twenty-five-tone* row, which was all the tones of two octaves.

[MUSIC: During the following paragraph, excerpt from an unidentified twenty-five-tone work by Cage, ca. 1933-34.]

And I would make compositions in which, over a range of three octaves, one would have two voices, the upper voice using the two higher octaves and the lower voice using the two lower ones, and they would share the middle octave. My compositional effort was to make the repetition of the tones in the shared octave as far apart as possible, even though they were used by both of the voices. And the voices didn't have a row, but they were obliged, each one, to use all twenty-five notes before they could repeat one of them. When I showed this to Buhlig, he said he couldn't teach me any further, and that he thought I should send the piece to [the American composer] Henry Cowell and have it published in the New Music Edition. And when I sent it to Cowell, he said that he thought that I should study with Schoenberg. So my inclination was in the direction of Schoenberg, but the decision to study with him was brought about through the remark of Henry Cowell.

Then I studied in order to prepare myself for Schoenberg, because I admired him very, very deeply and I didn't want to take his time, you know, without having properly prepared myself. So I studied first with Adolph Weiss, who was one of his first American pupils, and at the same time I studied with Henry Cowell, and that was done in New York. And by this time [in the fall of 1934], Schoenberg had gone to Los Angeles, and it so happened that both Cowell and Weiss were leaving New York, and so I drove west with Cowell and presented myself to Schoenberg. And he said, “You probably can't pay my price.” And I said, “You don't need to mention it because I have no money.” And he said, “Will you devote your life to music?” And I said, “Certainly.” And it was the second time I had been asked such a question, not about music but about the devotion of my life. I'd been asked that by an architect with whom I was studying architecture in Paris, and then I had said, “No, I won't devote my life to architecture.” But when Schoenberg asked me if I would devote my life to music I said, “Certainly.” [laughing] And somehow I think I haven't been unfaithful! So he said, well, he

would teach me free of charge, then. And I do very little teaching myself, but when I have had a pupil who is very gifted, I've done it free of charge, in order to repay, in that way, Schoenberg.



KEN HASLAM: Well, that's not only a delightful anecdote, Glenn, but it's a real surprise into the bargain.

GLENN GOULD: I thought it might just catch you off guard, sir.

K.H.: Ha-ha, indeed. But now Cage is talking about the thirties, after all. And I thought that, by that time, the thirties, he was already getting involved in music for prepared pianos, and—

G.G.: —and other quasi-Dada-esque, or post-Dada-esque, amusements? He was, yeah, sure.

K.H.: Yeah. But surely Schoenberg, with his profound sense of the Viennese traditions, couldn't have mustered any real enthusiasm for that sort of thing, Glenn.

G.G.: No, according to Cage, he certainly did not.

K.H.: [laughing] Well, then, what, in fact, did John Cage actually manage to learn from Arnold Schoenberg?

G.G.: That's what I asked him.



JOHN CAGE: I attended only his classes in analysis and the ones in counterpoint, and I studied with him for a little over two years. Once I showed him one of my compositions and he refused to look at it. It was a piece for clarinet solo, and I think that the idea of a single line was repugnant to him. He was very involved, as you know, in—well, in harmony, and it was my realization that I had no feeling for harmony that led to my stopping work with him. My mother was club editor of the *Los Angeles Times* at the time, and she had an automobile, and when she wasn't using it she would let me use it, and I frequently used it to chauffeur Schoenberg around Los Angeles. And, in the course of one of those drives, I explained to him that I had no feeling for harmony, and I think he already understood this from the way I did the work. I could do it correctly, but I couldn't do it with any feeling. And he said, "Well, without a feeling for harmony you'll never be able to write music." And I said, "Why not?" And he said, "You'll come to a wall and you won't be able to get through it." And I said, "Well, I'll simply bang my head against that wall." [laughing] "Oh!"

[MUSIC: Cage, excerpt from
First Construction (in Metal). Music
continues in the background, then fades out.]

I absolutely worshipped him. I believed everything he said, so that when I said that I would bang my head against this wall, I realized the truth of what he was saying, but I also realized the truth of my own predicament.

He was very emphatic about music being a question of repetition and variation, and he defined variation—perhaps this is well known, I don't know—but he defined variation as repetition in which some things remained of what was being varied and some things were changed, so that variation itself was repetition. And he liked variation to become more and more complex and far removed from the subject being varied. Whereas what I did was



to take a row, and then I didn't vary the fragment of the row at all, and I used the row itself to indicate where one of the fragments could connect with the previous fragment, so that if a fragment ended with, say, with an A-flat, and the next note in the row was a D, then any one of the other fragments, or that fragment itself, could follow it, transposed to D—do you see?

When I left Schoenberg, I began literally not banging my head but *banging*, and exploring things that could be rubbed or struck, and so developed a percussion ensemble. And though I was writing twelve-tone music of my own kind for *pitched* instruments, I was extremely interested in noise. And I decided to devote myself to noises.

John Cage, ca.1934-35, around the time he studied with Arnold Schoenberg. (Photograph courtesy of the John Cage Trust.)

NEW MUSIC ASSOCIATES

present

SCHOENBERG - BERG - WEBER N

A program of music by Arnold Schoenberg and his two most distinguished pupils, Alban Berg and Anton Webern

I

ANTON WEBER N: Five Movements for String Quartet, Opus 5 (1909)

Heftig Bewegt
Sehr Langsan
Sehr Bewegt
Sehr Langsan
In Zarter Bewegung

Morry Kernerman, Victor Feldbrill, violins; Eugene Hudson, viola;
Donald Whitton, cello.

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG: Das Buch der Hangenden Garten, Opus 15 (1908)

(The Story of the Hanging Gardens---15 songs to poems by Stefan George)

Roma Butler, mezzo-soprano; Glenn Gould, piano.

INTERMISSION

II

ANTON WEBER N: Variations for Piano, Opus 27 (1936)

Glenn Gould, piano.

ANTON WEBER N: Quartet for tenor saxophone, clarinet, violin and piano,
Opus 22 (1930)

Sehr Massig
Sehr Schwungvoll

Morris Weinzweig, tenor; Ezra Sohabas, clarinet; Morry
Kernerman, violin; Glenn Gould, piano.

(Because this work is, on first hearing, difficult, it will be played twice).

ALBAN BERG: Sonata in One Movement, Opus 1 (1908) *

Glenn Gould, piano

* This work has been recorded by Mr. Gould for Hallmark Records.

Arnold Schoenberg's Variations for Organ, announced as part of this program,
have regrettably been cancelled.

Program for a concert of music by Schoenberg and his two most famous pupils given in the concert hall of the Royal Conservatory of Music of Toronto, on 9 January 1954, under the auspices of the new-music company organized by Gould and his friend and former neighbour Robert Fulford, then a young journalist. The program notes for this concert consisted of the essay "A Consideration of Anton Webern," one of Gould's earliest writings, published in the inaugural Fall 1995 issue of *Glenn Gould*. (Glenn Gould Archive, Music Division, Library and Archives Canada.)

[MUSIC: Cage, excerpt from an unidentified duet for soprano and percussion. Music continues in the background, then fades out.]

When I decided to devote myself to noises and to percussion, I needed them because I was impressed by Schoenberg's insistence upon structure, and tonality. And seeing that with the noises I would not have harmony or tonality, but that I ought to have a structure, I examined the physical aspects of sound—the pitch, the duration, the timbre—and I saw that the only aspect of sound that existed when there was no sound was duration. And so I thought that the structure of music should be not as Schoenberg had thought, based on the frequency aspect of sound [i.e., pitch], but it should be based on the duration aspect of sound [i.e., rhythm]. And by doing that, I could have come in contact with music of the Middle Ages, but instead my mind ran to Indian music. And I made not an imitation of Indian music, but what I called a "micro-macro-cosmic" rhythmic structure, so that if I had a whole, I would divide it into a number of measures that was capable of having a square root. So that, say, a short piece would have one hundred measures, then it would be divided into ten tens; that would enable me to divide each ten measures into phrases that would reflect the division of the ten tens into parts, so that the large parts of the composition would have the same proportion that the small parts would to a unit.

Then, when I was introduced to the [1918 "symphonic drama"] *Socrate*, of [the French composer Erik] Satie, it seemed to me that I saw in it certainly not the idea that I was calling "micro-macro-cosmic," but I nevertheless saw a structuring according to phraseology. And I later made a study of all of his music, and I'm convinced that he did that. And I found notes at the Conservatoire in Paris, in Satie's notebooks—numerical relationships—suggesting symmetry, sometimes horizontally and sometimes vertically. And I mentioned these to [the French composer Darius] Milhaud, and he denied that they had anything to do with rhythmic structure; [laughing] he said they were Satie's shopping lists. But I'm convinced that they had to do with the way he composed. And it enabled him to write pieces that made sense even when the things that happened in the phrases were, from a German point of view, not very serious.

I also think that there were such ideas, let us say about phraseology, in Webern's mind.



KEN HASLAM: Well, now, *that* makes sense to me—the reference to Webern, I mean.

GLENN GOULD: I agree, yeah.

K.H.: Because, after all, Webern, or so it seems to me, had a very restricted emotional range, though I'm sure you'll disagree with that.

G.G.: Well—surprise, surprise, Kenneth—I don't really disagree with that at all. So there.

K.H.: Huh! And from what little I know of Cage's music, emotional involvement, in the usual—what would you call it?—declamatory sense, doesn't exactly play a major role.

G.G.: No, that's absolutely right, if only because, as he's stated himself, he wanted to explore the tranquil, the static, the non-developmental processes—there's got to be a contradiction in terms there somehow or other, I think!—of Eastern music. [They laugh.] No, I think you're absolutely right, Ken. Matter of fact, I asked Cage what might have happened to him if in fact he *had* been a student of Webern rather than of Schoenberg, which, I admit, is a very iffy and perhaps even rather unfair question.



JOHN CAGE: No, I think it's an interesting question. It's very curious that in making that survey of modern music, which I told you about, and all those lectures for the housewives, there was no lecture on Webern. I had not come across his music; it was not known by me at all at the time. So that your question is entirely hypothetical: I couldn't have chosen to study with him. *Had* I studied with him, I think I would have proceeded as I did when I became *aware* of his music, which was later in the forties.

[MUSIC: Anton Webern, closing pages of the first movement of the Symphony, Op. 21. Music continues in the background to the end of the movement.]

So that it's conceivable that I would not have understood Webern when I was studying with Schoenberg, I don't know. It was because of one of my pieces for prepared piano that [the American composer] Lou Harrison drew my attention to the music of Webern, and he said, "You would like Webern's music." And then, when I heard it, I saw that I loved it. When I heard those very short pieces [by Webern] for string quartet [Opp. 5 and 9], I recall being absolutely electrified by that music. I was sitting—practically *not* sitting—on the chair in the [concert] hall, and every sound was so important. The same was true when [the Greek-American conductor Dimitri] Mitropoulos conducted the [Symphony,] Op. 21. Because of the programming that day at the [New York] Philharmonic, after the Webern Op. 21 came something of Rachmaninov, I believe. And I had been invited to the concert by Virgil Thomson, and I asked him if he'd mind if I simply left the hall after the Webern; I was so impressed by the music and didn't want to hear anything further. And the same thing happened to [the American composer] Morton Feldman. We had not met one another before, and it was through our common devotion to Webern that we did meet.

I find, as time goes on, that I admire the music of Schoenberg more and more when I hear it. I think that we can look forward



to a time when Schoenberg's music will be admired and loved more than it has [been] in recent years. I think that, for a time, more attention has been given to Webern, but I think the interest in Schoenberg's music will increase rather than decrease.



KEN HASLAM: Well, as you said, Glenn, an interview full of surprises.

GLENN GOULD: Indeed, but I'm sure it's just not the result of centennial good cheer and all that. I think it's fascinating to hear Cage say that, as he grows older, Schoenberg's music means more and more to him.

K.H: Indeed.

G.G: And now, Kenneth, as they say in TV Land, for something completely different.

K.H: The music of Arnold Schoenberg, perhaps?

G.G: Quite so. And indeed, one of the major works from a genre that we've shamefully neglected thus far in the series.

K.H: Oh. To wit?

G.G: To wit: the set of four string quartets, which are certainly—well, I was going to say “seminal” works, but that's I think not quite the right word. They're really more like works of consolidation; three of them, anyway, are best described by the label, I think.

K.H: Well, now, we did hear part of the Second Quartet way back—when?

G.G: On Program 2, our *Liederabend* [song evening], wasn't it?

K.H: Ah, right. But, as I recall, it was introduced precisely because it *does* offer an element of innovation.

G.G: Exactly. And that's the exception I had in mind. Op. 10, the Second Quartet, does in fact offer, in its last two movements, when the quartet is joined by the soprano voice, as you remember, the very first atonal exercise that Schoenberg tried. But, with that exception, the other quartets are all works that seem to sum up an attitude, or period, and in that respect they're quite the opposite of the piano pieces, which tend to be try-out vehicles for Schoenberg. Because, you

know, the piano pieces [of] Op. 11 was the first complete atonal work, and Op. 19 was the first exercise in miniaturization, and Op. 25 was the first complete twelve-tone work, and so on.

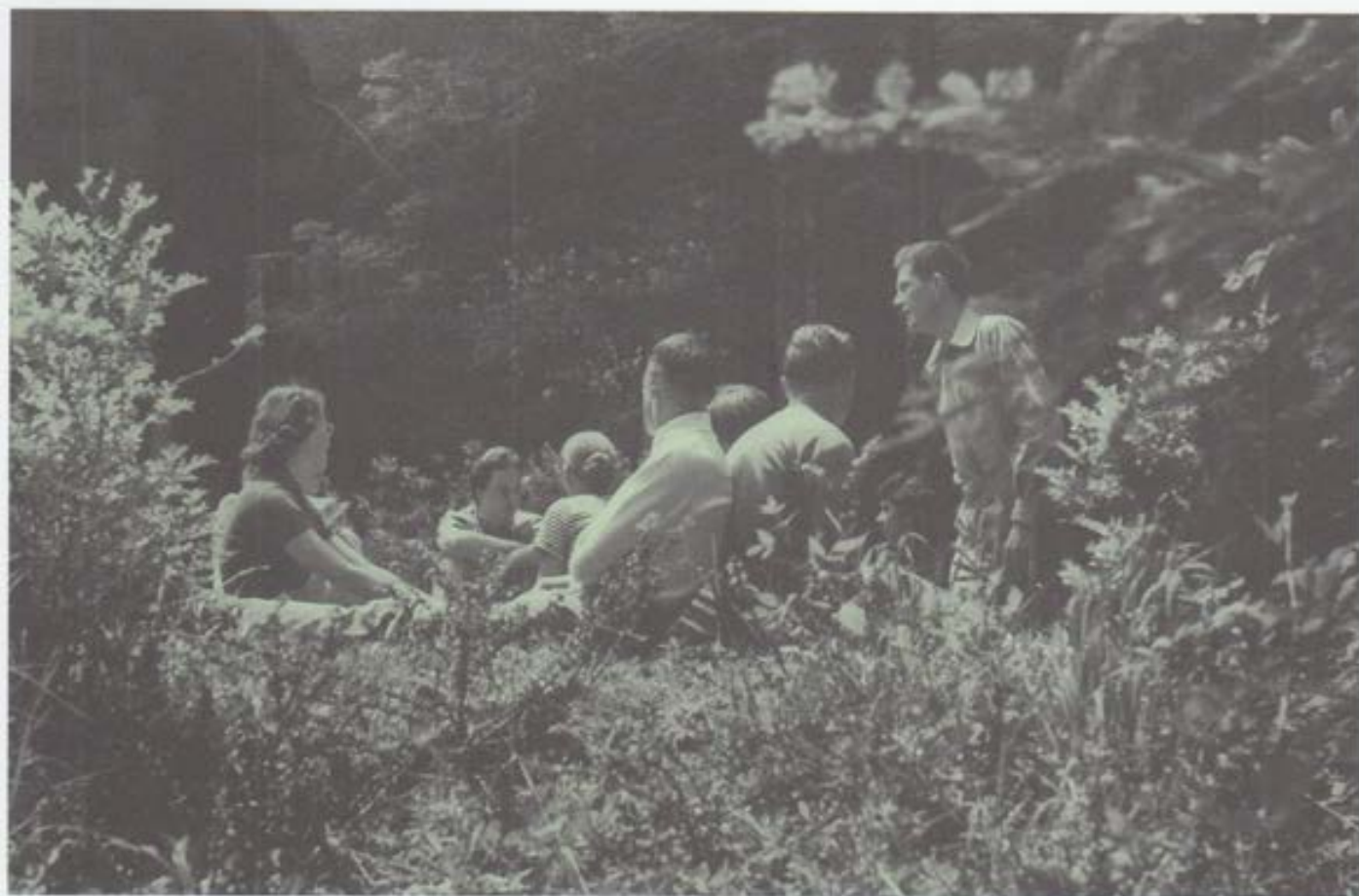
K.H: Yeah, right. But not so, then, in the case of three of the four quartets, I gather.

G.G: Right, right. The First Quartet [Op. 7], I think, is the—well, in my mind, anyway, it's the epitome of Schoenberg as Strauss disciple. It's a four-movements-in-one conceit à la Liszt—marvelous work—but, unlike the First Chamber Symphony, which has essentially the same formal design, it's not particularly aggressive in terms of harmonic indulgences. The Third Quartet [Op. 30] is really the summing up of his first fling with the twelve-tone technique; it's the wrap-up of that period [in the mid-1920s] in which he went neo-Classical, to some extent, with the twelve-tone system, in works like the Piano Suite [Op. 25] and the Wind Quintet [Op. 26] and so on.

K.H: Now, the Fourth Quartet?

G.G: Well, the Fourth, I think, in a way, is the archetypal product of his later twelve-tone style. One senses a very secure composer at work. I personally have the same problems with it and the same reservations about it as with the Piano Concerto, essentially.

K.H: Oh, the “new materials in old formats” syndrome?



G.G: Exactly, exactly. But of its kind it's an enormously impressive work, certainly. [laughing] It's just that I don't happen to be wild about its kind, I guess.

K.H: Yeah, yeah. Well, shall we hear it?

G.G: Indeed. And we're going to hear it—or rather three of its four movements: the first, third, and fourth movements—in a splendid performance by the Neues Wiener Streich-Quartett.

K.H: Ah, alias the New Vienna String Quartet.

G.G: Ah, *danke sehr*. But before we hear the record, eh, will you permit me—or rather permit John Cage—a last word?

K.H: Oh, certainly! On the subject of the Fourth Quartet?

G.G: No, nothing to do with the quartet. Just a very general, and very charming, comment about Schoenberg in toto. Because at the end of our conversation, I asked him one of those really dumb, hopelessly hypothetical questions to which there is no answer, and which I always save for the end of an interview, you know. [They laugh.]

K.H: Just in case the interviewee walks out!

G.G: Exactly.

John Cage teaching at a Mendocino County, California, counsellor's camp, ca. 1941-42. (Photograph by Carol Levine, courtesy of the John Cage Trust.)

K.H: And, the question in question?

G.G: The question in question was, What would Schoenberg's reaction be if he could come back and survey the musical scene of 1974?



JOHN CAGE: I'm afraid that he's stayed away too long to come back now. [laughing] I think he'd be absolutely shocked! [laughing] Had he come back a little sooner he might have corrected our evil ways! ☹

[MUSIC: Schoenberg, String Quartet No. 4, Op. 37/I (*Allegro molto, energico*), III (*Largo*), and IV (*Allegro*).]



The Schoenberg Series

Part 10

An Epilogue

GLENN GOULD: May I assume, Mr. Haslam, that you've come prepared with some appropriately summative comments for the occasion?

KEN HASLAM: Oh, for the occasion of our tenth and last Schoenberg soirée? Well, Mr. Gould, unaccustomed as I am to the role of class valedictorian, I had anticipated permitting you the final word.

G.G.: Oh, well, we did promise our producer—

K.H.: Mr. David Jaeger.

G.G.: Right. We did promise him an epilogue for the occasion, and since *Music of Today* ...

They continue talking in the background,
as the announcer, George McLean,
introduces the program.

↑
Arnold Schoenberg's hands, photographed in his studio in Brentwood Park, Los Angeles, 1940. (© Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna.)

G.G.: [*his voice coming into the foreground*] ... But, you know, Ken, even now, twenty-three years after his death, it's extraordinarily difficult to effect any really balanced judgement about Arnold Schoenberg's contribution. It's not particularly difficult to find an ax to grind, and with which one can whack away with such persistence that—

K.H.: —that one eventually carves for oneself a very special musico-critical niche.

G.G.: Exactly, right.

K.H.: Now, and if I may say so, a stroke of the [razor] blade, which you've not been unwilling to execute upon occasion, sir.

G.G.: Mmm, guilty, I guess, but—

K.H.: —but, now, I'm thinking of your specially patented theory, about the—oh, what would you call it?—"information overload," perhaps, in the late Schoenberg style?

G.G.: Oh, I see, yes, right.

K.H.: You talked about that on at least three occasions that I can recall: with [the conductor] Erich Leinsdorf [in Part 4], for example, and again in reference to the Piano Concerto [in Part 6]—

G.G.: Yeah, well, sure, but not obsessively, I hope, Ken. And anyway, you're absolutely right, although if it ever was patented I must tell you that the patents have now lapsed. [laughing] I was reading an extraordinary article the other day by the American composer George Rochberg, in which he dealt with the same subject, with the hexachordal techniques in late Schoenberg, or "information overload" as you termed it.

K.H.: Ah-hah, or "low-yield"—

G.G.: Oh, "low-yield dissonances"! And by the way, I am very glad, sir, that you got in that term one last time, since Herr Jaeger up in the booth yonder tells me that it absolutely drives him up the wall.

K.H.: Really?

G.G.: Yeah.

K.H.: Well, does he disagree with the analytic concept which led you to it?

G.G.: I'm not really sure. I think he disapproves of the fact that I have borrowed it from [the Republican U.S. senator] Barry Goldwater in the first place.

K.H.: [hushed voice] Could it be that he is a closet conservative?

G.G.: [hushed voice] I've had the same thought myself but I've been afraid to ask.

K.H.: Well, perhaps we'd best let sleeping producers snooze.

G.G.: I think so, yes.

K.H.: [normal voice] In any event, you were saying that George Rochberg utilized similar terminology, I think.

K.H.: [normal voice] Yes, I was. And of course, he didn't stumble across any terms so audaciously fanciful, if I may say so. [They laugh] But seriously, had I not come across this article rather after

the fact I would have loved to have invited him to elaborate upon it in even greater detail in the course of this series, because it was an extraordinary piece. Because what he attempted to zero in on, in effect, was the fact that, in his late works, tonal or otherwise, Schoenberg proceeded from certain rather unsafe assumptions about the auditory capabilities of his listeners, that—and I paraphrase, of course—that Schoenberg confused architectural clarity with auditory lucidity, that he assumed that if a structure faithfully fulfilled a preset principle it was therefore logical. And if it was logical, it would, given time, impose itself upon the retentive capacity of the listener.

K.H.: Forgetting all the while that no a priori assumption can be safely extended to such assumptions unless it rests initially upon a credible hypothesis.

G.G.: Precisely, absolutely.

K.H.: Well, you know, Glenn, this has been a leitmotif which seems to have turned up in many variants throughout the series. And I know that, for all your cavils about his technical methods and so on, your admiration for Schoenberg remains undiminished.

G.G.: Sure.

K.H.: So would it be fair to say that you feel that it's precisely this leitmotif which has, to some degree at least, handicapped Schoenberg qua the public at large, which has made him, a hundred years after the fact, so to speak, well, something less than a mainstream figure.

G.G.: Hmm ... Well, Ken, I really haven't been addressing myself, as you know, primarily to the question of Schoenberg's popularity, or lack of it, but I don't think that anyone would quarrel with your assessment of him as a figure who, despite having penned one or two relatively popular works—

K.H.: *Verklärte Nacht*, for example.

G.G.: Yeah—has nevertheless, even in respect to the generous catalogue of pre-atonal works that he did write, never really caught the public fancy, so to speak.

K.H.: Well, exactly. And I personally find it hard to see why those early pieces—oh, you know, like *Pelleas and Melisande*, for instance, or the *Gurrelieder*—

G.G.: Or the first two string quartets, certainly.

K.H.: Mmm, yeah—or indeed, well, practically *all* of the early songs with piano—have never struck the same vein of approval as, for example, the Mahler symphonies, or the Strauss Lieder—whatever. So, now, what I'm asking (I guess) is whether Schoenberg's consistently iconoclastic stance has something to do with this question of "information overload"—whether, in whatever idiom he pursued, there was in his nature a compulsive

tendency in that direction, which, whatever his intentions, Glenn, consistently alienated the public?

G.G.: Yeah ... and wow! [laughing] That's an enormous question, as you very well know. And you also very well know, I think, that I can't possibly begin to answer it definitively. But I think you're right, and I guess therein lies Mr. Schoenberg's problem. I think you're right, and I think the answer, to some extent at least, has to be yes, because I absolutely agree with your comment about the early pieces being relegated—*Verklärte Nacht* always excepted—to essentially the same obscurity that's been the lot of the twelve-tone works or whatever, and of course that makes no sense at all. So I absolutely agree that there has to be *some* sort of explanation more logical than the usual "Oh, well, the name of Schoenberg chases audiences away"-type response, which is what one usually gets when one *does* pose your question. Of course, that was a point with which Erich Leinsdorf scored heavily. Do you remember that marvelous fantasy of his about the "information-overloaded" lecturer?

K.H.: [laughing] Oh, indeed, yeah; it was a delightful anecdote.

K.H.: Yeah, and he related it, of course, to the fact that in many ways Schoenberg was a very Brahmsian character, and *that* brings me, indeed, to an insight recently obtained, I may say, into the psyche of the honourable gentleman opposite [i.e., Haslam].

K.H.: Really?

G.G.: Indeed. Well, it's a phenomenon which I've noticed in terms of your, well, your "reaction pattern," so to speak, throughout the series, Ken, in relation to the works that you've apparently enjoyed, as opposed to those that I rather suspect you've tolerated in the line of duty.

K.H.: Indeed!

G.G.: Well, indeed yourself! Do you remember one day—about three years back, I guess—in the CBC cafeteria, we were playing association games—

K.H.: Oh, yeah, you mean: If I were Adolf Hitler, what kind of a car would I be?

G.G.: To which the answer, of course, is: a 1938 Mercedes 540K. Exactly, yeah. [They laugh.]

K.H.: I remember! But what's that got to do with the price of wheat?

G.G.: Oh, just that in the course of that divertissement I set out to discover with which composer you, Kenneth Haslam, most identified. Remember?

K.H.: Ah, yes ... And if I'm not mistaken you guessed Edward Elgar, [composer of the "Enigma" Variations,] which I thought

was a somewhat pompous parallelism, if I may be frank.

G.G.: [laughing] Nonsense, sir, it alluded, needless to say, to the intriguingly ... *enigmatic* aspects of your character.

K.H.: [groaning at the joke] Needless to say ...

G.G.: And you will undoubtedly recall that when you asserted the inaccuracy of my perception, I accepted at face value your own self-analysis.

K.H.: To wit?

G.G.: To wit, that your prime identification was with Brahms. Mind you, I still think Elgar is a much better bet for you, but we'll not pursue the matter further. [They laugh.]

K.H.: Well, whether or not you agree with my Brahmsian identification, sir, I know, of course, that as a dyed-in-the-wool Wagnerian you can't be expected to share it.

G.G.: Quite right, and—

K.H.: And you're surely not going to debate the ample evidence for Schoenberg's identification with Brahms?

G.G.: Not the evidence, certainly; I agree there's plenty of it. But Schoenberg himself told, in one of his essays, how as a very young man he would gather with his fellows, Kaffeeklatsch-fashion, and attempt to conduct search-and-destroy missions—oh, that'll upset Mr. Jaeger, won't it?—search-and-destroy missions, Mr. Jaeger, on behalf of theretofore-hidden leitmotifs in [Wagner's opera] *Tristan und Isolde*. And, while no one denies the Wagnerian imprint of his earliest pieces, I suspect that, later in life, he shied away from the mystical trappings of the Wagnerian theorems, without really shedding the numerological trappings that accompany them, you know.

K.H.: Well, OK, so what's the problem?

G.G.: Well, the problem—or part of it, anyway, I think—has something to do with this conflicted attitude of his toward his *own* past, something to do with the fact that Schoenberg, even in so leitmotivically inspired but inherently absurd mutations of the idea as tone-row composition, *did* maintain a very uneasy mix of Wagnerian fantasy and Brahmsian practicality. And I think that the works in which that particular mix occurs, while fascinating for students of musical schizophrenia, I guess, are, because of the Brahmsian influence, just about impossible to reconcile with the sort of emotional expectations that the full-blown Wagnerian mystique commands. And at the same time, because of what we can call the Wagnerian overlay, they do not readily fulfill the (to my ears) rather too predictably punctual formal drives of the Brahmsian aesthetic either. You understand, Ken, this is no criticism of Schoenberg; I'm really just casting about for answers to your question as best I can.

[illegible]

Peters Edition 6060

A page from one of Gould's own scores of Schoenberg's *Phantasy*, Op. 47. Some of his annotations relate to the piece's tone-row structure, others to the editing of his 1964 recording with the violinist Israel Baker. (Glenn Gould Archive, Music Division, Library and Archives Canada.)



Gould and Yehudi Menuhin, in October 1965, rehearsing Schoenberg's *Phantasy*, Op. 47, for their CBC television special *Duo*, which aired on 18 May 1966. (Photograph by Barry Wilson. CBC Still Photo Collection.)

K.H.: Well, I did notice a sort of "I'll go my way, you go yours" attitude, but how does that relate to the "information overload" complaint you were registering earlier?

G.G.: Well, technically it makes persistent use of the hexachordal divisions, as in pieces like the *Ode to Napoleon*, about which I've complained at considerable length in the past, as you know. But the very fact that Schoenberg *does* permit the piano to operate within its own rhythmic frame, so to speak, makes a considerable difference to the level of comprehensibility that the *Phantasy* encourages, I think. Mind you, I still think it's full of uneasy mixtures of Brahms and Wagner—you know, the expressionistic violin lines, soaring and diving, and the equally expressionistic harmonics, etc., and the relatively foursquare sentence structure, which—

K.H.: —which you would attribute to friend Johannes [Brahms], of course.

G.G.: Right.

MUSIC: The *Phantasy* fades out in the background.

K.H.: Yeah, well, Glenn, I assume you have an example close at hand?

G.G.: Indeed. I can't think of a better illustration than a snippet from the *Phantasy* for violin and piano, Op. 47.

MUSIC: Schoenberg, *Phantasy*, for violin with piano accompaniment, Op. 47/bars 1-7, then continuing in the background. Israel Baker, violin; Glenn Gould, piano (1964 Columbia Masterworks recording).

G.G.: You know, Ken, one of the unique things about that piece is that the violin line was conceived monodically.

K.H.: You mean, as an unaccompanied solo?

G.G.: Right. And all of the interpolations from the piano were added after the fact, which, among other things, accounts for the fact that said interpolations are almost always found on the cracks, rhythmically speaking.

K.H.: And yet, back when you were talking with Henry[-Louis] de La Grange [in Part 5], about the Vienna of Strauss and Mahler, you came down pretty hard on the idea that Schoenberg, whether he admitted it or not, was a Strauss devotee.

G.G.: Well, yeah, sure, and I don't know about his devotion to Strauss—personally, I mean; we *do* all know that he was devoted to Mahler, certainly. But the point I was trying to make—and one with which M. de La Grange did not quarrel, by the way, despite his own bias on behalf of Mahler—was that Schoenberg had already absorbed, by this thirtieth year or thereabouts, the Strauss mix of Wagner and Brahms, which, in Strauss's case, I think, was a mix heavily weighted in favour of Wagner, though held in some kind of balance by the rococo formalism of Strauss, and above all by the Straussian habit of transferring that which was mystical and exotic in Wagner onto eminently workable and pragmatic lower planes. Witness Strauss's deployment of the six-four chord, which is—

K.H.: Are you going to tell me what a "six-four" is now, Glenn, or later?

G.G.: Oh, well, a six-four [chord] is simply the tonic triad of any key reset by inversion in such a way that its lowest tone—as opposed to its fundamental tone, which remains the tonic, of course—its lowest tone is identical with the dominant of the key in question. [Editor's note: For example, a C-major triad in "six-four" position has the dominant G, rather than the tonic C, in the bass, and hence is harmonically unstable.] The point being that in Wagner the six-four was inevitably employed as an orgasmic climax requiring minutes of preparation, while in Strauss it was the most ready, not to say heady, of clichés, always available and hang the circumstances—a promiscuity that infuriated Stravinsky, by the way, and, confirmed Straussian though I am, I will concede that it does tend to be subject to the Law of Diminishing Returns. But the point I was trying to make is that the—

K.H.: Yeah, I was beginning to wonder if there was one ...

G.G.: [mock-offended] ... In the interests of centennial good fellowship, I'll let that pass, Mr. Haslam. ... The point was—is—pick your tense—that Strauss, in my view, synthesized certain aspects of the Wagnerian-Brahmsian vocabulary. Schoenberg picked up on the Strauss synthesis and then willingly intellectualized it, or interiorized it, or whatever, the net result of *his* synthesis of Strauss's synthesis being, in the language of tape editing, an added generation, the high-frequency loss of which was—

K.H.: Er, with respect, Mr. Gould, may I suggest that you don't get carried away with *that* kind of idiom. It's likely to give "low-yield dissonance" a run for its money.

G.G.: [laughing] Objection noted and filed, sir. Now, where was I? Oh, yes—the high-frequency deterioration of which—

K.H.: I must interrupt with a bulletin: David Jaeger has just left the control room.

G.G.: Splendid! I've reached my producer-provocation quota for the week. [They laugh.] Now then, as I was saying: it produced a rather more emotionally restrained—or, if you prefer, even drained—mutation of the Straussian vocabulary, sir.

K.H.: Yes, but this would surely apply only to the early works of Schoenberg, Glenn? You're not trying to make a case for a post-Straussian aesthetic in the post-tonal era, surely?

G.G.: Well, er ... I don't know. Am I trying to make a case for that? Only in the sense that, as I said, Strauss utilized his seemingly exotic affectations, like his six-four[-chord] hang-up, as pragmatic solutions. And I think that that element of pragmatism was always present in Schoenberg to some degree, misdirected though it may have been on some occasions—viz the twelve-tone technique and its rationale. Well, anyway, let me try out on you a work that Schoenberg wrote in 1929 for male chorus, absolutely tonal, not just pseudo-tonal (as in the *Ode to Napoleon* or whatever) or "wrong-note" tonal (as in the Monn transcription)—

K.H.: You mean that cello concerto from which we heard that horrendous snippet [in Part 8] some weeks ago?

G.G.: Right, right. But this one possesses the ultimate Strauss-into-Reger-into-Schoenberg mix, in that it is on many occasions what I would call an harmonically accelerated work: you know, implications replace actual manifestations harmonically; the ear grants a presence that is inferred rather than stated. And, to come full circle, it's not unrelated to the "information overload" capacity which got us launched on this whole long thing—since you did ask if I had a point someplace. [They laugh.]

K.H.: What's it called, Glenn?

G.G.: Well, that's the best part of it. Are you ready? It's called, "Obligation."

MUSIC: Schoenberg, "Verbundenheit" [obligation],
No. 6 from Six Pieces, for male chorus *a cappella*, Op. 35

K.H.: Hey, I really liked that.

G.G.: I rather thought you would.

K.H.: Particularly, Glenn, because I've always associated—perhaps wrongly—but nevertheless, I have associated that period around 1930 with the most astringent byproducts of Schoenberg's twelve-tone methodology.

G.G.: Yeah. Well, of course, I know you don't share my affection for the early twelve-tone pieces, Ken, but actually you're right. That delightfully skittish—and, needless to say, I don't use *that* term pejoratively—that delightfully skittish rococo pattern, really, of the early [twelve-tone] pieces disappears in the late twenties and the beginning of the thirties, as he seemed to feel the (in quotes, of course) more "serious" obligations of art thrust upon him. So you're right, the end of the twenties does mark a change, and again I think the change relates, in part at least, to a downgrading of the Straussian mix.

K.H.: Now, then, Glenn, when you say that, of course, I assume that you again do not mean to imply any idiomatic identification.

G.G.: No, no, no, certainly not, Ken. I simply meant that—well, for instance, that, by comparison, one might hold that Beethoven's most frequently tapped resource was *his* utilization of what I would call the "Haydn mix," a mix of, let's say, Bach's assorted sons and a good dollop of Handel thrown in, and that *that* mix was phased out by Beethoven to a point where—well, Haydn-esque orchestrations like the Eighth Symphony aside, perhaps—one would be hard put *not* to concede that by, let's say, post-mid-period works like the "Les Adieux" Sonata and the Op. 95 quartet maybe, the *main* Beethovenian thrust was to erect a monument to (again in quotes) the "pure" contrapuntal skills of

Bach, as opposed to what you might call the "convenience counterpoint" of Handel.

K.H.: Yeah, which, as you said, played a part in the Haydn mix.

G.G.: Yeah, well, in the same way I think that, after 1930 or thereabouts, the Straussian mix lost its influence on Schoenberg and—

K.H.: —and was replaced by—?

G.G.: Well, I think it was replaced—in addition, of course, to the ongoing Brahmsian identification—by a certain attempt, especially in the choral works, and particularly in those written at the very end of his life, to relate to, or to make contact with, certain values of the later Renaissance, really.

K.H.: Really!

G.G.: Mm-hm. Well, of course, this is not a point free of contention, by any means, Ken. As you know, I'm doing a full-length [radio] documentary on Schoenberg at the moment [*Schoenberg: The First Hundred Years—A Documentary Fantasy*], a kind of summing up of all the major bases we've tried to touch upon in the course of this series, and one fascinating opinion-conflict I ran into was the question of just how alert Schoenberg really was to the message of history.

K.H.: Well, now, Denis Stevens said two weeks ago [in Part 8] that—now I think this is fairly accurate—that Schoenberg cited Renaissance trends, or particularly, I think he said, the North European—

G.G.: The Netherlands School.

K.H.: Yeah, right—to prove the validity of twelve-tone techniques.

G.G.: Yes, that's right.

K.H.: Now, matter of fact, I remember raising an eyebrow at that particular line, Glenn.

G.G.: Well, you'll be pleased to know that you have the tacit support of [the Austrian composer] Ernst Krenek with your raised eyebrow.

K.H.: Oh, really?

K.H.: Yeah. I interviewed Krenek a couple of months ago, and he described some conversations with Schoenberg about historical influences, Krenek's own most notable influence being the music of [the fifteenth-century Franco-Flemish composer Johannes] Ockeghem. And it's fascinating to "A-and-B" [i.e., compare] the Stevens opinion with that of Krenek, because Krenek's impression is that Schoenberg had no particular interest in

Renaissance culture, or indeed in anything earlier than Bach at all. As a matter of fact, he even quotes Schoenberg as saying to him, [with a German accent] "Why should I want to write like Palestrina?" [They laugh]. And Krenek goes on to say that Schoenberg never *did* concede that one could absorb an influence, in this case a Renaissance influence, without producing imitations thereof.

K.H.: But, now, you've just said that Schoenberg *did* manifest a pseudo-Renaissance contrapuntal style in his later works.

G.G.: Indeed. I think he did. And I think maybe there's an explanation for the seeming disparity between the Krenek and Stevens accounts of this. I think that, while Krenek is an impeccably reliable and of course invaluable first-hand witness, his testimony is compromised by the fact that by every account I've ever heard from anyone who knew Schoenberg personally, as Krenek did, he was notoriously touchy, to borrow Krenek's own term for it, in regard to anything that appeared like un-asked-for advice. And then again, of course, in the case of Krenek, Schoenberg was dealing with a musicologically trained composer whose expertise in regard to the Renaissance is second to none, and given Schoenberg's own rather defensive nature—

K.H.: I'm sure that would have put him on his guard immediately, yeah.

G.G.: Right. No, I do think a case can be made for a Renaissance-like purity of counterpoint in the last works, and, as I said, particularly in the last choral works, and—well, shall we go straight to the very end of the canon for an example?

K.H.: The end being—?

G.G.: The end being the [*Modern*] *Psalm*, Op. 50c, which stands in relation to Schoenberg's output, I guess, as the *Art of Fugue*'s last fugue does to Bach's.

K.H.: You mean, in the sense that he died prior to its completion.

G.G.: Indeed. And we hear it in a performance in which the soprano line just trails off into space, and that line, I think, translates as, "Oh, my Lord: Your grace left us; prayer is a bond, a blissful bond, with You. As a rapture that gives us more than fulfillment." And as I say, that line, which was by the way written by Schoenberg himself, just trails off into space, the last music that Schoenberg ever wrote.

MUSIC: Schoenberg, *Modern Psalm*
[modern psalm], for speaker,
four-part mixed chorus,
and orchestra, Op. 50c.

K.H.: ... Well, I guess one can't help getting just a little bit—



G.G.: Choked up?

K.H.: Yeah, something like that, Glenn, when you know that you've just heard the last thoughts of a great man.

G.G.: Indeed,

K.H.: However, sir, it occurs to me that our own last thoughts should include due and proper credit to the participants in the performance we've heard on this program.

G.G.: Right, right, very well. The psalm was performed by the Festival Singers, conducted by Robert Craft, and he also conducted the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Chorus, I think it was, in "Obligation," from Op. 35.

K.H.: And the excerpt from the *Phantasy*?

G.G.: —er, was performed by the violinist Israel Baker, with Yours Truly "on piano," as they used to say in Birdland circles.

Gould in a CBC radio studio, pencil and stopwatch in hand, during the production of the Schoenberg series, 1974. (Photograph by Robert C. Ragsdale. CBC Still Photo Collection.)

K.H.: Well, this is a bit late in the day for it perhaps, but since we're onto the subject of Schoenberg's interpreters, I meant to ask, at an appropriate time in the series—

G.G.: Well, the clock is running out, sir, so you won't get a more appropriate time than this!

K.H.: True, true. Well, now, I'm sure the answer is self-evident, Glenn, but the question, in any case, was whether in fact what you call performance traditions have grown up around Schoenberg?—whether, because of his own influence on the first interpreters of his music, the traditions were frozen, so to speak, or whether, as with any great composer, they're in a state of flux?



Arnold Schoenberg composing, in Los Angeles, around 1935. (© Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna.)

Check one only below ... [They laugh.]

G.G: Well, I think you already know which one I'll check, Ken. No, with no question: a state of flux, obviously. I think, however, in Schoenberg's lifetime there was a curious combination of events which conspired to influence performance practice. The works obviously made pretty heavy going for the performers of that time. The idioms were wholly unfamiliar and the natural response to that condition was a certain caution, a caution that would make the music appear less spontaneous than it really was, you know. On the other hand, the performing traditions in general at that time were orientated towards the conventions and convictions of Romanticism.

K.H.: Yes, of course.

G.G: One need only remember, I guess, that Schoenberg's prime benefactor among conductors—at any rate, at least, in America—was Leopold Stokowski. So, the combination of those two elements, the—

K.H.: —“cautious Romanticism”?

G.G: Right, exactly, thank-you. The combination really worked against the nature of the music. Needless to say, I'm not thinking of great artists like Stokowski when I say that; Stokowski was realistic enough—or canny enough, if you prefer—to pick from the Schoenberg canon works which were particularly compatible with his own temperament.

K.H.: Yeah, *Verklärte Nacht*, for example.

G.G: Sure. And, of course, his early recording, on umpteen-dozen 78-r.p.m.s, of *Gurrelieder* was a landmark in Schoenberg interpretation on disk. No, I was thinking, rather, of the majority of Schoenberg's early interpreters, who did appear downright intimidated by the music, and did perform it against the grain,

so to speak, of their own emotive instincts. Now, in the years immediately after 1945, on the other hand, the serialists—to the extent that some of them, Pierre Boulez for example, were also interpreters—performed music according to their own constructive lights, and in my view made it well-nigh unlistenable. Mind you, they were analytically aware, I'm sure, rather more so probably than their colleagues of the preceding generation, and there are certainly major exceptions. If you remember, in the opening program I opted for the Bruno Maderna version of the Serenade [Op. 24], which I think is one of the most lyrical and joyful and, at the same time, logical Schoenberg interpretations I've ever heard. And I must say that Maderna's premature death last year really deprived us of one of the very few conductors who, again in my view, has ever been able to bring that repertoire completely to life. But you know, Ken, the best way I can answer your question is to say that, a few weeks ago, I was able to hear a performance, on CBC—a live performance, I am bound to add—of the First Chamber Symphony, and—

K.H.: —oh, which is, of course, at the top of your personal chart of Schoenberg's Greatest Hits.

G.G.: Yes, sir, it is. There are only maybe two works in the whole world of music—the other one being [Strauss's tone poem] *Ein Heldenleben*—about which I have the sort of collector's passion which might be analogous to the zeal with which we latched onto model [warplanes like] Hurricanes and Spitfires as kids, although I'm sure that your generation was much more into Ford Tri-Motors or Curtis Hawks, perhaps? Zeppelins, maybe?

K.H.: [mock-offended] I beg your pardon, Mr. G. Elgarian I may be; antiquarian I am not. And I deeply resent the implication. [They laugh.]

G.G.: Peace, Mr. Haslam, peace, peace. Such wrath does us no credit at a time of centennial good cheer.

K.H.: Oh, very well.

G.G.: Besides, what's a decade among friends?

K.H.: [laughing] Well, I think I may join David Jaeger in a walk-out.

G.G.: [laughing] Well, I'd advise against it, because a present, sir, specially selected with you in mind, is even now being cued up on the turntable.

K.H.: Oh, really?

G.G.: Oh, indeed! But let me just finish that from which I was so abruptly deflected.

K.H.: Yeah, the Chamber Symphony collection ...

G.G.: Indeed. I heard, as I said, a CBC tape of the E-major Chamber Symphony made at one of the, er—

K.H.: Oh, the CBC Summer Festival Concerts, was it?

G.G.: Whatever they call those things, yeah—and featuring the Stratford Festival Ensemble, which I gather has yet to celebrate its own first anniversary, and conducted by a young man by the name of Raffi Armenian. And having heard, I think, every recording ever made of that piece, and a lot of broadcast tapes into the bargain, I can state unequivocally that this was—is—I demanded it immediately for my own files, a copy of it that is—the most logically set out and, best of all, most affectionate performance of that really great work that I've ever heard.

K.H.: Well, that certainly is an upbeat answer.

G.G.: Happy to supply one, sir.

K.H.: But I assume, Glenn, since we already did hear a performance of it on the first program in the series, my present doesn't consist of a similar preview of the Stratford players' version.

G.G.: No, as I said, and that version indeed was already aired a couple of months back, near the beginning of the Schoenberg [centennial] festivities on CBC.

K.H.: Well, er, what *is* my present?

G.G.: Would you believe *Verklärte Nacht*?

K.H.: [laughing] I would, because I saw it listed in the brochure—

G.G.: You cheated, sir!

K.H.: —and I didn't realize I was intended as the beneficiary, Glenn.

G.G.: Well, Mr. Haslam, sir, you've been a tower of strength through this whole thing, you've sat uncomplaining throughout great gobs of my favourite Schoenberg, and I can think of no more appropriate way of expressing my appreciation than to sign off with what I know to be your favourite work by the master. And now, if [the technician] Mr. Burton is ready—

K.H.: He's nodding from the booth that all systems are go.

G.G.: And if the basses of the New York Philharmonic are fine-tuned—

K.H.: Bang-on, it would appear.

G.G.: Then, a happy centennial to you, Kenneth Haslam!

K.H.: Ah, peace at last ...

MUSIC: Schoenberg, *Verklärte Nacht*
[transfigured night], Op. 4, arranged
for string orchestra.

The musical score is written for a string sextet. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system has five staves, with the top staff containing a melodic line and the lower staves containing more complex rhythmic patterns. The second system continues the melodic line and adds more complex rhythmic patterns. The third system shows a dense texture with many notes and rests. The notation is in D major, as indicated by the key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The piece is a string sextet, so the staves represent the six strings of the orchestra.

The closing bars of Schoenberg's string sextet *Verklärte Nacht*, Op. 4, reproduced from Gould's own miniature score. This radiant, shimmering cadence in D major—albeit in one of the string-orchestra arrangements Schoenberg himself made in 1917 and 1943—was the last music listeners to Gould's Schoenberg series heard. (Glenn Gould Archive, Music Division, Library and Archives Canada.)

On 21 May 2004, the National Library of Canada and the National Archives of Canada merged; as a result, the Glenn Gould Archive is in the Music Division of what is now called the "Library and Archives Canada." The Web site of the Gould archive is now at: <http://www.collection-scanada.ca/glenn Gould/index-e.html>

The Virtuoso Piano Transcription Series

6

Wagner - Gould

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg
(Vorspiel / Prelude)

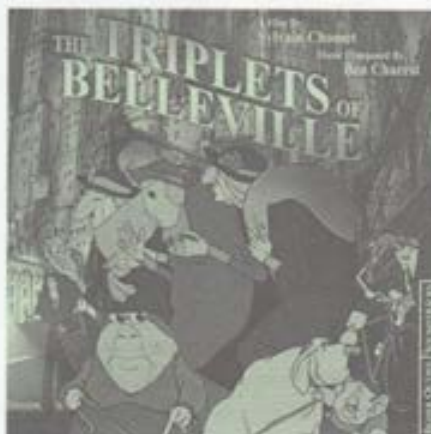
SCHOTT

The piano transcription of the Prelude to Act 1 of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* recently appeared as part of the German music publisher Schott's ongoing edition of Gould's compositions and arrangements. The transcription often requires a third or fourth hand, since Gould recorded it, in 1973, by overdubbing himself where Wagner's counterpoint became too dense for two hands. "The complete realization in performance would require a second pianist at a second piano," the edition's editor, Carl Morey, writes, in his Preface, "but the musical essentials of the transcription may be played by a solo pianist who might incorporate material from the *secondo* part according to individual technique and imagination."

Speculation on the subject of Gould and Asperger's Syndrome has not abated. On 10 February 2004, for instance, Robert Fulford, Gould's childhood neighbour, defended the diagnosis in his regular column in the Toronto-based *National Post*. Recently, on the Web site of the Canadian newsmagazine *Maclean's*, we came across an article, dated 28 April 2003, about Margaret Atwood's

then new, dystopic novel *Oryx and Crake*, and these sentences caught our attention:

At one point [in the novel, the character] Jimmy dimly recalls that Crake's real name was Glenn, with two "n"s, after "a dead pianist, some boy genius." Asked about drawing this link between the animal-loving Crake, who clearly has Asperger's Syndrome—a high-intellect variant on the spectrum of autistic disorders—and the notoriously eccentric Glenn Gould, Atwood responds eagerly. "I bet, I'll just bet, that Gould had Asperger's, even if they didn't diagnose it back then. Want to know a factoid I learned after I wrote the book? When he was ten, Gould wrote an opera where all the people died at the end, and only the animals survived. That gave me a chill."



We were startled to discover a reference to Gould in *The Triplets of Belleville*, Sylvain Chomet's eccentric and acclaimed 2002 animated feature film. A few minutes into the film's prologue, the central characters, an old woman and her young grandson, sit mesmerized in front of a black-and-white television watching a pianist give a high-octane performance of the C-minor prelude from Book 2 of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. The pianist is in a studio before a microphone, seated low on a straight-backed chair, hunched over almost nose-to-keys, informally dressed, his legs crossed, his elbows and wrists dangling below the keyboard, his eyes closed, his lips gaping, his hair and cuffs flapping. Though not named, and seen through the filter of Chomet's arresting visual style, the pianist's identity is obvious. Gould does not play on the soundtrack, however.

The National Ballet of Canada's 2003-2004 season opened in November with a program including *one hundred words for snow*, a homage to Gould choreographed by Dominique Dumais. The program ran 13-19 November at The Hummingbird Centre for the Performing Arts, in Toronto, and Dumais gave a public talk before the 14 November performance. In this work she endeavours, through dance, to capture the northlands of Canada and portray Gould's personality and approach to music. The soundtrack mixes Alexina Louie's string-orchestra work *O Magnum Mysterium: In Memoriam Glenn Gould* (1982) with taped music and a sound collage created by Eric Cadesky. John Coulbourn, in the *Toronto Sun*, referred to Dumais's work as "a monochromatic work of arresting simplicity" and found "every single one of her words a thing of beauty." *One hundred words for snow* was first performed in November 1999, in a National Ballet program entitled "Inspired By Gould." It also included a solo by Margie Gillis, danced to the Goldberg Variations; William Forsythe's *The Vile Parody Of Address*, set to Gould's recording of the B-flat-minor fugue from Book 1 of the *WTC*; and *A Disembodied Voice*, by the ballet's artistic director, James Kudelka, set to a score by John Oswald that featured Gould's own voice.

Jörgen Lundmark, a Friend in Stockholm, writes to tell us about a book of essays in Danish, with an eminently Gouldian title: *Den kreative løgn: 12 kapitler om Glenn Gould* [The creative lie: twelve chapters on Glenn Gould], by Karl Aage Rasmussen. The book was first published in 2002, by the prestigious house Gyldendal, of Copenhagen (www.gyldendal.dk).

Also, Lundmark and another Friend, Jörg Scheuven, of Germany, both write to alert us to the release, in 2003, of a new recording of Gould's String Quartet, by the Bruxellensis Quartet. It appears on a CD from the Belgian label Kalidisc (KA2006), along with four chamber-music works by the contemporary Belgian-Canadian composer Michel Lysight.

"Gould tourism"—the phenomenon of Gould fans visiting Toronto-area places related to his life and career—was the

subject of an article entitled "Glenn Gould Holiday/Sur les pas de Glenn Gould," by Li Robbins, in the April/May 2004 issue of *VIA Destinations*, a bilingual magazine published by VIA Rail Canada for their passengers. The article hits many of the usual targets, from his childhood home in the Beach neighbourhood to his apartment building at 110 St. Clair Avenue West, from Mount Pleasant Cemetery to the Metro Toronto Zoo, where he sang Mahler to some laconic elephants in *Glenn Gould's Toronto*.

Which reminds us: Over the years, various people have thought to prepare a "Gould Guidebook" to Toronto for the benefit of the ever-growing number of Gould pilgrims. To date, however, no such book has materialized ...

Ernst Zolstberg, of Toronto, who translated some Russian-language reviews for our Fall 1997 issue, writes to tell us that *Non, je ne suis pas du tout un excentrique*, the third volume of Bruno Monsaingeon's French-language edition of Gould's writings (first published in 1986), was published in 2003 by Classica-XXI, in Moscow, in an elegant, copiously illustrated edition with a revised introduction. This apparently marks the first time that a Gould-related book has been published in Russia—surprising, considering that his fame there has never waned since his triumphant concert tour in May 1957.

Gould's love of the music Richard Strauss is well known. He became a passionate Strauss fan in his mid-teens, and remained one to the end of his life; his last "contrapuntal radio documentary," which aired in 1979, was about Strauss, and his last recording session as a pianist, on 3 September 1982, just a month before his death, was devoted to a sonata Strauss composed at the age of sixteen. Over the years, he championed Strauss's music in countless concerts, recordings, radio and television broadcasts, published writings, lectures, and interviews.

Today, it is sometimes forgotten that Strauss's music (especially his late music) was the subject of widespread controversy and criticism at precisely the time Gould was championing it. After the Second World War, during the heyday of post-Webern serialism, nothing was less

in tune with contemporary trends in classical music than Strauss's unabashed Romanticism, and it took courage for a young musician in the fifties and sixties to declare that Strauss—not Schoenberg, not Webern, not Stravinsky—was "the greatest musical figure who has lived in this century." Among musicians of note, Gould was a lone voice on the subject in those days, a fact that Straussians have come increasingly to realize.

We noted several years ago, for instance, that the first footnote on the first page of Michael Kennedy's 1999 biography *Richard Strauss: Man, Musician, Enigma* refers to Gould. (Kennedy talked more about Gould and Strauss in an interview played during the 1999 Glenn Gould Gathering, in Toronto.) Other performers and scholars have noted Gould's prescience on the subject of Strauss—most recently the musicologist Bryan Gilliam, in the 5 September 2004 edition of *The New York Times*.

In a long article on Strauss's late opera *Daphne* (1937), a work that Gould adored and that made its belated New York stage debut this fall at the New York City Opera, Gilliam noted that Strauss embraced dualities like profound-trivial, high art-popular art, and tonality-atonality. "In 1961, the pianist Glenn Gould stood nearly alone when he called these artificial boundaries into question," Gilliam continued. "Writing to Leonard Bernstein, Gould praised Schoenberg and Strauss as the two greatest composers of the 20th century, adding that Strauss's greatness would be recognized once 'the time-style equation, which clutters most judgment' of his later work, had dissolved." And Gould was right, as the current state of Strauss's reputation shows.

On Sunday 26 September 2004, the CBC celebrated Gould's seventy-second birthday with a surprising and amusingly un-Gouldian tribute: a live concert of French piano music. The two-hour event, at Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto, was broadcast on both CBC Radio One and Radio Two, to launch the eleventh season of the weekly series *OnStage*, which regularly features performances by leading Canadian artists. Gould, of course, never performed in or even visited France, claimed to suffer from a "general francophobia," and despised French music (though he

excepted a few works by Cherubini, Berlioz, Bizet, and others). But this year, obviously, the CBC decided that its annual nod to Gould's birthday should for once take the form of an ironic tribute.

And so, in his honour, the pianists Naida Cole and David Jalbert offered a program of solo- and two-piano works that were either French or in a French style, all of them also connected in some way to the dance. The live performances included Bach's Partita No. 1 in B-flat Major, and works by Ravel: *Le tombeau de Couperin*, "Laidronnette" from *Ma mère l'oye*, and the composer's own two-piano transcriptions of his *Boléro* and *La Valse*. The broadcast also included an interview with the pianists, and excerpts from Cole's recordings of Ravel and Satie.

In addition, listeners heard what Gould called "my transcription of Ravel's transcription of *La Valse*," which he performed on CBC television in 1975, as well as a private recording, made when he was around fifteen, of François Couperin's monumental Passacaille in B Minor, in an arrangement by his teacher, Alberto Guerrero. (Guerrero was an admirer and acquaintance of the pioneering harpsichordist Wanda Landowska, and sought, in his arrangement, to mimic the registrations in Landowska's 1934 recording of the Passacaille.) The latter recording included Gould's hilariously pompous spoken introduction, which says much about his attitude toward Romantic piano playing in his mid-teens—and toward his teacher:

Glenn Gould: I would like to record now Couperin's Passacaille in B Minor. Now, a great many people, when they hear that someone is going to play a work of this age and of this type, they'll say, "Now, my boy, the first thing to do is to play it very dully, and of course without any pedals." Now, there are two mistakes. For we must remember that we are not trying to sacrifice in the piano what the harpsichord did not have, but rather to create an impressionistic effect of what the harpsichord did have. I shall try and do that for you now. Here is Couperin's Passacaille in B Minor.

Male voice in the background (Bert Gould?):
As arranged by—

Glenn Gould: As arranged by Mr. Alberto Guerrero.

New Friends of Glenn Gould

The Friends of Glenn Gould, founded in 1995, is a society for those who share an interest in Gould's artistic accomplishments and visionary ideas, and who wish information about special events, new publications, audio and video releases, and so on. Friends will receive the twice-yearly journal *GlennGould*, among other benefits, and will have the opportunity to receive rare Gould items not otherwise available to the public. Friends will also support The Glenn Gould Foundation's ongoing efforts to promote public awareness of Gould's work and ideas.

For information on becoming a Friend of Glenn Gould, please contact Malcolm Lester, Managing Director of the Foundation, at the address given on page 102.

The following is a list of new Friends whose names were received from 1 April to 30 September 2004. All Friends who joined the society before 31 December 1996 have been permanently designated as *Founding Friends*.

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ABOUT THE GLENN GOULD FOUNDATION

The Glenn Gould Foundation was established in Toronto in 1983, to honour and perpetuate the memory of Glenn Gould. Apart from initiating projects of its own, including the triennial Glenn Gould Prize and the Friends of Glenn Gould, it encourages others to develop projects concerning Gould and the field of music and communications. The Foundation has been associated with numerous broadcasts, publications, exhibitions, and conferences in Canada and abroad.

The Mission Statement of The Glenn Gould Foundation: To extend awareness of the legacy of Glenn Gould as an extraordinary musician, communicator, and Canadian, and to advance his visionary and innovative ideas into the future.

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*"The action is the test
in the world
don't change anything"*

Glenn Gould 1932-1982



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Glenn Gould

Glenn Gould in early 1974, during the filming, in Toronto, of Bruno Monsiegnon's four-part film portrait for French television. (Photographer unknown.)