Directed by...François Girard
Produced by...Mikhael Aller and Niv Fichman
Screenplay... François Girard and Don McKellar
Additional material...Glenn Gould
Cinematography...Alain Dostie
Editing by...Gaétan Huot
All piano performance by...Glenn Gould

Colm Feore...Glenn Gould
Derek Keurvorst...Gould's father
Katya Ladan...Gould's mother
Devon Anderson...Gould age 3
Joshua Greenblatt...Gould age 8
Sean Ryan...Gould age 12
Kate Hennig...Chambermaid
Sean Doyle...Porter
David Hughes...Stagehand
Allegra Fulton...Waitress
Gerry Quigley...Music Critic
Gale Garnett...Journalist
David Young...Writer
James Kidnie...Photographer
Moynan King...Questioning Woman
Michael Kopsa...Broker
Bruno Monsaingeon...Himself (Violin I, Opus #1)
Yehudi Menuhin...Himself
Margaret Pacsu...Herself
Jessie Greig...Herself
Megan Smith...Herself
Walter Homburger...Himself
Ray Roberts...Himself
Bob Phillips...Himself
Jill R. Cobb...Herself
Bob Sylverman...Himself
Elyse Mach...Herself
Mario Prozak...Himself
Valerie Verity...Herself
Vern Edquist...Himself
Gilles Apap...Himself (Violin II, Opus #1)
Jean Marc Apap...Himself (Viola, Opus #1)
Marc Coppey...Himself (Cello, Opus #1)
Irradiated persons: Alain Dostie, François Girard and Jennifer Jonas

For excerpt from “Idea of North,” the first part of Gould’s CBS “Solitude Trilogy” and links to other CBS Gould items, visit:
http://archives.cbc.ca/arts_entertainment/music/topics/320-1709/

There is a good deal of interesting Gould information and many useful web links at the Glenn Gould Foundation website:
www.glenngould.ca.


Glenn Herbert Gould was born on September 25, 1932, in Toronto, which would be his home for the rest of his life. (The family’s original surname, Gold, was changed around 1939.) Gould’s prodigious musical gifts, including perfect pitch, were apparent by age 3, and as a child he learned the rudiments of music and the piano from his mother. He studied theory (1940-7), organ (1942-9), and piano (1943-52, with Alberto Guerrero) at the Toronto (later Royal) Conservatory of Music, earning his Associate diploma, with highest honors, at age 12. From age 5, Gould occasionally played in public, on piano and organ, and he competed in a few music festivals, but his parents never subjected him to the life of a star prodigy. He made his professional recital and concerto debuts in 1947, and by the early 1950s was known across Canada through concert appearances, CBC radio and television broadcasts, and recordings. From 1953, he performed often at the annual Stratford Festival, even serving from 1961 to 1964 as one of its directors of music.

In January 1955, Gould made his American debut, with recitals in Washington, D.C., and New York. His unorthodox programme (Sweelinck, Gibbons, Bach, late Beethoven, Berg, and Webern), distinctive piano style, idiosyncratic interpretations, and unusual platform mannerisms marked him as an iconoclast. The day after his New York debut, he signed a contract with Columbia Records, for whom he recorded exclusively thereafter. His first recording, of Bach’s Goldberg Variations, was released in 1956 to critical and popular acclaim, and brought him international attention. For the next nine years, he lived the life of a touring virtuoso. He gave concerts throughout North America, and between 1957 and 1959 made three overseas tours, playing in the U.S.S.R., Western Europe, Israel, and London, earning praise and arousing controversy wherever he went. His eccentric character, both on stage and off, provoked nearly as much comment as his playing, and he was the subject of colorful publicity from the beginning of his career. In 1964, Gould retired permanently from public performance, citing temperamental, moral, and musical objections to the concert medium. He went on to become an outspoken champion of the electronic media -- of studio recording, broadcasting, and film-making. He made scores of recordings, acquiring theoretical and practical insights into the recording medium unusual for a classical performer. He made countless radio and TV programs for the CBC, conventional recitals as well as talk-and-play shows on particular themes. In the 1960s and 70s, he made seven innovative "contrapuntal radio documentaries" -- evocative tapestries of sound that blended elements of documentary, drama, and musical composition. Four were portraits of musicians he admired, the others a fascinating "Solitude Trilogy" about people living in isolation: The Idea of North (1967); The Latecomers (1969), about Newfoundland; and The Quiet in the Land (1977), about Mennonites in Manitoba. Gould also made programs for the BBC (Conversations with Glenn Gould, 1966), and for French and German television (Chemins de la musique, 1974; Glenn Gould Plays Bach, 1979-81).

Gould was prolific as a writer, especially after 1964; he explored many musical and non-musical topics in record-liner notes, periodical articles and reviews, scripts for broadcasts and films, interviews, and, in the early 1960s, a few public lectures. He composed from childhood, and was particularly active in his teens, when he wrote piano pieces, a bassoon sonata, and many unfinished works. His only major composition is the long, one-movement String Quartet, Opus 1, composed 1953-1955 and later published and recorded. From the beginning of his concert career, he spoke often of quitting performing in order to devote himself to composition, but after the String Quartet he completed few works,
mostly humorous occasional pieces. He arranged music for two feature films: Slaughterhouse-Five (1972) and The Wars (1982).

Gould was one of the most unconventional classical musicians of modern times. His repertoire was highly selective: he played few of the early-Romantic and impressionistic works at the core of the piano repertoire, preferring Baroque, Classical, late-Romantic, and 20th-century music, mostly by Austro-German composers; he also played Elizabethan music, transcriptions, and a few works by Canadians. He played Bach and Schoenberg, the composers most central to his repertoire and aesthetic, with particular authority. He upset many conventions of piano-playing, as with his fondness for detached articulation, but he was widely admired for his virtuosity, probing intellect, command of musical architecture, rhythmic dynamism, precise fingerwork, and clarity of counterpoint. Believing that the performer's role was properly creative, Gould offered original, deeply personal, sometimes shocking interpretations (extreme tempos, odd dynamics and phrasing) that have always been controversial, particularly in well-known works by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms.

By age fifty, Gould claimed to have largely exhausted the piano literature that interested him, and turned to a new interest: conducting. In 1982, he made a chamber-orchestra recording -- as unusual as any of his piano recordings -- of Wagner's Siegfried Idyll, and he had ambitious plans for at least several years' worth of conducting projects, some of them to be associated with films. After that, he planned to give up performance entirely and devote himself to writing and composing, perhaps retiring to the countryside. But on September 27, 1982, shortly after the release of a new recording of the Goldberg Variations, Gould suffered a massive stroke. He died, in Toronto, on October 4.

Since his death, Gould's international fame has grown steadily, and his work has been widely disseminated. His writings, interviews, and letters have been collected and translated. In 1992, Sony Classical began releasing his live and studio recordings, films, and broadcasts in two comprehensive series: the Glenn Gould Edition, on CD (eight volumes with more than 70 CDs); and the Glenn Gould Collection, on videotape and laserdisc (sixteen hour-long volumes). Also in 1992, CBC Records began releasing some of his radio documentaries and early broadcast performances (to date, eleven CDs). In 1995, the German music publisher Schott undertook an edition of his compositions.

Gould has posthumously been the subject of a large and diverse collection of literature, not only in English: many publications in French, German, Italian, Japanese, and other languages demonstrate a passionate international following. Countless radio and TV broadcasts have been devoted to him, and he has inspired novels, plays, musical compositions and arrangements, poems, visual art, and the Canadian feature film Thirty-two Short Films About Glenn Gould (1993). Whole conferences have been devoted to Gould -- two in Toronto (1992 and 1999), others in Montreal (1987), Amsterdam (1988), and Groningen, The Netherlands (1992) -- and there have been many smaller exhibitions, film festivals, and other Gould events around the world. An international Glenn Gould Society was based in Groningen from 1982 to 1992, and published a semi-annual Bulletin. The Glenn Gould Foundation, created in Toronto in 1983, has since 1987 awarded a triennial Glenn Gould Prize in music and communications; in 1995 it formed an international Friends of Glenn Gould society, with its own semi-annual journal, GlennGould. Gould was much honoured during his lifetime -- for example, he received the Harriet Cohen Bach Medal (1959), a doctorate from the University of Toronto (1964), the Canada Council's Molson Prize (1968), the Canadian Conference of the Arts' Diplome d'honneur (1976), and the Canadian Music Council Award (1981) -- and has posthumously received awards and tributes of many kinds, from cultural institutions and from every level of government. His papers and personal effects are housed at the National Library of Canada, in Ottawa, and in the Canadian Museum of Civilization, in Hull.

In the years since his death, Gould has proven to be one of Canada's most important and influential cultural figures, and one of the world's most popular, admired, and intensely studied classical musicians.

**The Goldberg Variations**, BWV 988, are a set of an aria and 30 variations for harpsichord by Johann Sebastian Bach. First published in 1741 as the fourth in a series Bach called Clavier-Übung, "keyboard practice", the work is considered to be one of the most important examples of variation form. It is named after Johann Gottlieb Goldberg, who may have been the first performer. (from Wikipedia)

**Recordings of the Goldberg Variations**: Before Gould’s 1955 and 1983 New York recording of the Goldberg Variations the best known recordings were probably the November 1933 Paris and 1945 sessions by Wanda Landowska on harpsichord. There are dozens of other recordings, most on piano or harpsichord, but they have also been scored for an recorded on guitar, strings, accordion, organ, marimba and harp. A downloadable 48-minute video of Gould playing the Goldberg Variations is online at [http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-6984208089899995423](http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-6984208089899995423) (this is shot at 1.33 frame ratio; to be sure you’re seeing the entire image, resize the frame until you see the black bars on either side of GG).
recording, and then he judges its effect upon her. Again, in another scene, he asks a hotel chambermaid to listen to a piece of music twice, and then says, "I think we might really have something there." The movie does not deliver, or suggest, a rounded life story. But it leaves us with a much richer idea of his life than a conventional biopic might have. We see the young Gould at his piano (from childhood, he always fancied a stool just 14 inches off the ground, placing his eyes not far above finger-level). And we see him listening intensely to a radio broadcast of a concert. Our imagination is challenged to feel the music entering him. There are other episodes, some as mundane as a telephone call to a friend, others as startling as that last concert in 1964, where he soaks his hands in warm water, then walks slowly through backstage corridors, hesitates before walking on stage, and signs a stagehand's program, adding the words, "the last concert." Some of the "short films" show episodes from a life. Some show ideas inspired by the music. Some are the documentary testimony of friends, including Yehudi Menuhin, who talk with the warm recollection they might use at a memorial service. One brief sequence simply shows Gould sitting in a chair, listening. We gather he became a hermit of sorts, but a contented one, doing what he loved. The movie makes no suggestions at all about his sexual life, does not deal in gossip, and seems almost proud of its outsider's viewpoint. The filmmakers do not claim to know the secrets of Glenn Gould, but only to be fascinated by them. The notes with the movie recall that when one of the producers, Barbara Willis-Sweete, was working in the late 1970s as a bartender at the hotel where Gould was living, she followed him late one night as he left with a large bag. He eventually dropped it in a garbage can, and she retrieved it, to find it contained only old newspapers. The point of this story, I think, is not what the bag contained, but that the bartender followed him. The film is made in something of the same spirit, as if the filmmakers admire Gould's work, are puzzled by his life, and want to follow him, unobserved. They discover no great answers or revelations, but by the end of the film they, and we, have a remarkable impression of a life lived curiously, but well. (29 April 1994)

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**Roger Ebert in the Chicago Sun-Times:**

How to suggest an actual human life on film? Most biopics shape the enigmatic events of life into the requirements of fiction, so that most lives seem the same, and only the professions and the time periods change. François Girard's "Thirty Two Short Films about Glenn Gould" brilliantly breaks with tradition and gives us a movie that actually inspires us to think about what it was like to be this man. Glenn Gould (1932-1982), born in Toronto, could play and read music before he was four years old. Taught only by his mother until he was 10, he was soon giving concerts in Canada and the United States, where Leonard Bernstein was one of his admirers. He became one of the great concert pianists of his time, and then, on April 10, 1964, without advance notice, he gave his last concert and refused to perform in public ever again. That was not the end of his career but the beginning of an extraordinary second career, in which he channeled all of his efforts into making recordings. His choice of the recording studio over the concert stage was explained in different ways at different times; he didn't like the idea of a performer upstaging the music, he would say, or he could not abide the idea that some people in the audience had better seats than others. He stayed at home, in Toronto recording studios and hotel rooms, cultivating a benign eccentricity, talking to his friends endlessly on the telephone but sparingly in person. And he left behind a rich recorded legacy, including his performances of Bach's Goldberg Variations (one of Gould's Bach performances has since left the solar system on board Voyager One).

Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould was inspired by the Goldberg Variations, and is a series of brief vignettes suggesting variations on the actor's life. Colm Feore plays the pianist, as a calm, physically economical man whose most highly developed sense, we feel, is his hearing. There is a scene midway in the film where Gould enters a roadside diner where he is apparently a familiar face. As he waits for his eggs to arrive, he listens to the conversations around him, and the soundtrack pieces these words of strangers together in such an intense way that we listen, too. In another scene, he asks a hotel chambermaid to listen to a recording, and then he judges its effect upon her. Again, in a recording studio, he listens to a piece of music twice, and then says, "I think we might really have something there." The movie does not deliver, or suggest, a rounded life story. But it leaves us with a much richer idea of his life than a conventional biopic might have. We see the young Gould at his piano (from childhood, he always fancied a stool just 14 inches off the ground, placing his eyes not far above finger-level). And we see him listening intensely to a radio broadcast of a concert. Our imagination is challenged to feel the music entering him. There are other episodes, some as mundane as a telephone call to a friend, others as startling as that last concert in 1964, where he soaks his hands in warm water, then walks slowly through backstage corridors, hesitates before walking on stage, and signs a stagehand's program, adding the words, "the last concert." Some of the "short films" show episodes from a life. Some show ideas inspired by the music. Some are the documentary testimony of friends, including Yehudi Menuhin, who talk with the warm recollection they might use at a memorial service. One brief sequence simply shows Gould sitting in a chair, listening. We gather he became a hermit of sorts, but a contented one, doing what he loved. The movie makes no suggestions at all about his sexual life, does not deal in gossip, and seems almost proud of its outsider's viewpoint. The filmmakers do not claim to know the secrets of Glenn Gould, but only to be fascinated by them. The notes with the movie recall that when one of the producers, Barbara Willis-Sweete, was working in the late 1970s as a bartender at the hotel where Gould was living, she followed him late one night as he left with a large bag. He eventually dropped it in a garbage can, and she retrieved it, to find it contained only old newspapers. The point of this story, I think, is not what the bag contained, but that the bartender followed him. The film is made in something of the same spirit, as if the filmmakers admire Gould's work, are puzzled by his life, and want to follow him, unobserved. They discover no great answers or revelations, but by the end of the film they, and we, have a remarkable impression of a life lived curiously, but well. (29 April 1994)

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**ONE more TO go IN BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS XVIII:**

April 21 Pedro Almodóvar ALL ABOUT MY MOTHER/TODO SOBRE MI MADRE 1999

This week in 3 x 3 @ AKAG, Thursday Evenings at the Albright-Knox, 7:30 p.m.: Yasujiro Ozu's TÔKYÔ MONOGATARI/TOKYO STORY, 1949. For more information go to http://3x3.cc
PRELIMINARY SCREENING SCHEDULE FOR BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS XIX, FALL 2009:

Sept 1 Mark Sandrich *Top Hat* 1935
Sept 9 Raoul Walsh *High Sierra* 1941
Sept 16 Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger *Black Narcissus* 1947
Sept 23 Jules Dassin *Rififi* 1955
Sept 30 Kenji Misoguchi *Akasen chitai/Street of Shame* 1956

Oct 6 Richard Brooks *Elmer Gantry* 1960
Oct 13 Roman Polanski *Knife in the Water* 1962
Oct 20 Stanley Kubrick *Lolita* 1962
Oct 27 Carl Theodor Dreyer *Gertrud* 1964

Nov 3 Eric Rohmer *My Night at Maude’s* 1969
Nov 10 Andrei Tarkovsky *Solaris* 1972
Nov 17 Arthur Penn *Night Moves* 1975
Nov 24 Ridley Scott *Blade Runner* 1982*

Dec 1 Bela Tarr *Werkmeister Harmonies* 2000
Dec 8 Mike Leigh *Topsy-Turvy* 1999

*We’ve been trying to get *Blade Runner* since we started Buffalo Film Seminars in 1999, but prints have never been available. A new version, *Blade Runner: The Final Cut*, was released into limited distribution in 2007 in both 35mm and digital versions. We’re hoping to get one of those. We’ll tune the list of films as try to book the others. We’ll send an email to the list once the bookings are final and, as always, we’ll post the confirmed list on the Buffalo Film Seminars web site.

…email Bruce Jackson bjackson@buffalo.edu
…for the series schedule, annotations, links and updates: [http://buffalofilmseminars.com](http://buffalofilmseminars.com)
…to subscribe to the weekly email informational notes, send an email to addto list@buffalofilmseminars.com
....for cast and crew info on any film: [http://imdb.com/](http://imdb.com/)

The Buffalo Film Seminars are presented by the Market Arcade Film & Arts Center and State University of New York at Buffalo with support from the Robert and Patricia Colby Foundation and the Buffalo News