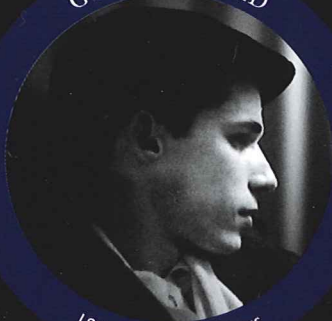


BACH
Goldberg Variations, BWV 988
Partita No. 5, BWV 829

GLENN GOULD



1954-1955 Recordings

Glenn Gould, Piano

RECORDED
LIVE
NAXOS
1990 1991 1992 1993 1994

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750): Goldberg Variations • Partita No. 5

Bach wrote his *Goldberg Variations BWV 988* in 1741 and published them as a culmination to his *Clavier-Übung*, a collection that included his major works for solo keyboard including the six *Partitas*. Bach was nearly sixty years old when he wrote this work and the only great keyboard work to follow the composition of the *Goldberg Variations* was the *Art of Fugue BWV 1080*. Bach simply titled the work 'Aria with variations for harpsichord with two keyboards', and the story that this long work was written for the amelioration of Count von Keyserlingk's insomnia has no credible foundation. The Count's resident harpsichord-player, however, was Johann Gottlieb Goldberg, a highly talented pupil of Bach who no doubt would have been familiar with the composition, and the title may have evolved from his name after the work was published. It is also possible that Bach wrote the work for Goldberg to play to his master Keyserlingk and fashioned its technical style specifically with Goldberg's virtuoso capabilities in mind. These variations are notable for Bach's use of virtuosic keyboard writing, canon, and intricate form whilst the virtuoso writing style of some of the variations may have been influenced by the keyboard music of Domenico Scarlatti. The *Aria* (a *Sarabande* from *Anna Magdalena's Clavierbüchlein* of 1725) forms the harmonic rather than melodic structure on which the work is based. The fascinating form has the thirty variations grouped into three sets of ten with a canon at every third variation (each time rising by one step of an interval) these canons culminating in the *quodlibet* (Variation 30, which incorporates two popular song melodies), before the serenity of the original *Aria* is repeated to close this masterpiece of keyboard-writing and, in effect, begin it again, as the work has come full circle and reached the place where it began.

The Canadian pianist Glenn Gould was born in 1932 and it was with Bach's *Goldberg Variations* that he burst onto the world's musical stage in 1955. He had been appearing on radio and television in Canada from the early 1950s but in January 1955 made his

United States recital début in Washington D.C. with this work. The day after his New York début, he signed a contract with Columbia records and recorded with that label for the rest of his life. One of the last recordings he made was another version of the *Goldberg Variations*, recorded in 1981 just before his death.

Most of Gould's radio broadcasts were made in his home town of Toronto, but the performance of the *Partita No. 5 in G major BWV 829* from 4th October 1954, was recorded in Montreal for the International Service of Radio Canada. It was a favourite work of his early years when touring Canada, and he played it at his United States début in Washington with the *Goldberg Variations*. He recorded the work for Columbia in 1957.

The mid-1950s were a time of improvement and involvement, the time of Nicholas Ray's film *Rebel without a Cause*, when the teenager's voice was being heard for the first time. It was the Bach playing of the youthful 23-year-old Glenn Gould that caught the public's imagination at this time; it was a kind of Bach style that had not been heard before, with great attention to clarity and detail, little use of the sustaining pedal, and sometimes rapid or extreme tempos. With hindsight of more than fifty years, this recording can be seen not as the work of an iconoclast who was out to shock the periwigged Father Bach and his devotedly reverential followers, but more a sweeping away of the accumulated detritus of previous generations who thought that the work was merely an instructive exercise in form. This idea, combined with Gould's energy and drive, allows the work to emerge not as a restored masterpiece, but as something altogether new yet somehow familiar - vital, exciting, fresh, and brimming with joyful pleasure in its existence. Familiar, because at the same time Gould never gave the feeling that he was striving for effect in his Bach playing; he was always totally committed to his interpretation which was fully supported by his thoroughly researched ideas.

Gould's 1955 recording of the *Goldberg*

Variations, however, needs to be put into perspective. Wanda Landowska made the first complete recording of the work on the harpsichord in November 1933 (Naxos 8.110313). Before Gould's recording was released in 1956, other piano versions already available on LP included those by Rosalyn Tureck and Jörg Demus, and it is interesting to note that after Gould's recording was released, Tureck recorded the work again in 1957 for EMI. Tureck's version, however, is altogether different, using slower tempos and observing every repeat, making for a work of nearly eighty minutes in duration (as opposed to Gould's 38 minutes). Following that, maybe as a reaction to these two new recordings on the piano, the next six or seven recordings of the *Goldberg Variations* to be released were made on the harpsichord. It should also be remembered that the *Goldberg Variations* were performed on the piano in public long before Gould appeared on the scene. In London in the 1920s Busoni performed his own edition of the work (in the preface of which he wrote, '...I considered it expedient, for public performance, to suppress entirely some of the variations') and his pupil Egon Petri also played it (in one recital at the Wigmore Hall programmed with Mozart's *C minor Fantasy* and Beethoven's *Piano Sonatas Op. 110* and *Op. 111*). During the 1930s it was heard in the concert hall performed on the piano by Rudolf Serkin, Philip Lévi, Eduard Erdmann and Claudio Arrau, whilst in 1938 Wilhelm Backhaus included the work in a

programme at the Queen's Hall with two other formidable sets of variations – the *Diabelli Variations Op. 120* by Beethoven and the *Paganini Variations Op. 35* by Brahms.

Gould's recording of the *Goldberg Variations* has been referred to as one of the most important and influential piano discs of the second half of the twentieth century and some would say of the whole century. Its influence on Bach playing on the piano cannot be overestimated as any pianist who played Bach after this recording's release altered their style either consciously or unconsciously. On the positive side this led to a wider appreciation of Bach's keyboard works by the general public; on the negative side it spawned a whole generation of imitators who could be classed as the 'sewing-machine' perpetrators of Bach playing.

When Gould's recording was released the *American Record Guide* made their opinion plain by heading their review 'The Record Début of Glenn Gould a Keyboard Genius.' In Britain the *Gramophone* found that although some of his tempos were fast, 'his is a speed connected with urgency more than with show or brilliance.'

As we listen to this important recording, Glenn Gould reminds us that Bach wrote this work 'for the enjoyment of music lovers.'

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GREAT PIANISTS • GLENN GOULD

J. S. BACH: Partita No. 5 in G major, BWV 829

1	Praeambulum	(2:09)
2	Allemande	(2:40)
3	Corrente	(1:06)
4	Sarabande	(3:06)
5	Tempo di Minuetto	(1:27)
6	Passepied	(1:09)
7	Gigue	(1:43)

Recorded 4th October, 1954 in the CBC Studios, Montreal.

First issued on Canadian Broadcasting Company International Service

Transcription Disc CBC 120

J. S. BACH: Goldberg Variations, BWV 988

8	Aria	(2:01)
9	Variation 1	(0:45)
10	Variation 2	(0:37)
11	Variation 3	Canon on the unison (0:55)
12	Variation 4	(0:29)
13	Variation 5	(0:37)
14	Variation 6	Canon on the second (0:34)
15	Variation 7	(1:09)
16	Variation 8	(0:45)
17	Variation 9	Canon on the third (0:38)
18	Variation 10	Fughetta (0:42)
19	Variation 11	(0:54)
20	Variation 12	Canon on the fourth (0:56)
21	Variation 13	(2:10)
22	Variation 14	(0:58)
23	Variation 15	Canon on the fifth (2:16)
24	Variation 16	Overture (1:18)
25	Variation 17	(0:53)
26	Variation 18	Canon on the sixth (0:46)
27	Variation 19	(0:42)
28	Variation 20	(0:48)

29	Variation 21	Canon on the seventh	(1:42)
30	Variation 22	Alla breve	(0:42)
31	Variation 23		(0:54)
32	Variation 24	Canon on the octave	(0:57)
33	Variation 25		(6:28)
34	Variation 26		(0:52)
35	Variation 27	Canon on the ninth	(0:49)
36	Variation 28		(1:10)
37	Variation 29		(1:00)
38	Variation 30	Quodlibet	(0:48)
39	Aria da capo		(2:12)

Recorded 10th and 14th-16th June, 1955 in the Columbia 30th Street Studios,
New York City

First issued on Columbia ML-5060

Glenn Gould, Piano

Reissue Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn
Special thanks to Matthew Harding for providing source material

(Note: The momentary dropout at 0:29 in Track 7 is in the original source.)

Also available



8.110634



8.110765

Playing
Time
51:53

Johann Sebastian
BACH
(1685-1750)

8.111247

ADD



05537

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	Partita No. 5 in G Major, BWV 829	13:21
1	Praeambulum	2:09
2	Allemande	2:40
3	Corrente	1:06
4	Sarabande	3:06
5	Tempo di Minuetto	1:27
6	Passepied	1:09
7	Gigue	1:43
	Recorded 4th October, 1954 in the CBC Studios, Montreal.	
	Goldberg Variations, BWV 988	38:32
8	Aria	2:01
9-88	Variations I - XXX	34:19
88	Aria da capo	2:12
	Recorded 10th and 14th-16th June, 1955 in the Columbia 30th Street Studios, New York City	
	Glenn Gould, Piano	

The Canadian pianist Glenn Gould burst onto the world's musical stage in January 1955 when he made his United States recital début in Washington D.C. with Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. His 1955 recording of the work is one of the most important and influential piano discs of the second half of the twentieth century, leading not only to a wider appreciation of Bach's keyboard works by the general public but to a fundamental re-appraisal of how Bach should be played. When the recording was released the *American Record Guide* headed its review with 'The Record Début of Glenn Gould a Keyboard Genius.' With its great attention to clarity and detail, little use of the sustaining pedal, and sometimes rapid or extreme tempos, this vital and exciting performance is the complete antithesis to the 'sewing-machine' style of Bach playing.

Reissue Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn
Special thanks to Matthew Harding for providing source material
Cover image: Glenn Gould (Private Collection)

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