

He'll Write Cowboy Songs But Won't Shake, Pardner

By **PETER DESBARATS**

(Tribune Staff Writer)

Try as you may, it's impossible not to notice Mr. Gould is a mite eccentric. Especially when it comes to hands.

Most people, when you offer one to them, shake it. Mr. Gould, on the other hand, does everything but leave the room. It makes you feel like crawling back to the leper colony.

While he disdains anyone else's hands, Mr. Gould is completely occupied with his own. Cantilevered

into a chair, he puts them through endless gymnastics. The routine is interrupted only by a knuckle-cracking session every five minutes.

To Keep Supple

"Have to do it all the time," he said, popping away like a small rifle range. "It's the only way I can keep them supple."

He's odd, but not offensive. Somehow his eccentric manner works as well with people as it does with pianos. And Glenn Gould, at 24, is probably the most brilliant pianist Canada has ever produced.

He made his formal debut as soloist with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in 1947. Long acclaimed by critics, it was only after a New York concert in 1955 that he rocketed to popularity. Since then writers have chortled over his every eccentricity, and they're legion.

Chair and Kettle

He trots around to concerts with his own chair, inches shorter than the usual pianist's bench. He takes electric kettles to rehearsals so he can bathe his hands in hot water. Obsessed by a fear of draughts, he often wears overcoats indoors and out, winter and summer.

"I'm sick of all this publicity," he said, huddling down into his overcoat and tightening his scarf. "Well? It IS draughty in here."

"Certainly I worry about my hands," he said. "They hurt. The damp weather in Vancouver last weekend didn't do them any good. I'm going to get some treatments before the concert here."

Another rattle of knuckles, and he continued: "One Vancouver paper compared me and — what's his name? — Presley."

Not Amused

"I was less than amused."

Whether he likes it or not, the magazine articles describing his antics at the piano have brought him dozens of fan letters from adoring teenagers. He rarely answers them.

Arriving here from Vancouver Wednesday, the young musician brought a typical Gould gadget — a piece of carpet to place beneath a foot that insists on tapping loudly throughout concerts. He'll use it here tonight when playing with the Winnipeg Symphony.

Tonight's concert will mark the end of a strenuous tour of Canada and the United States. He leaves here for a two-week rest before embarking on another tour extending into Europe and Russia by this spring.

Cowboy Pal

"I can't wait to get back to the 'estate' near Toronto," he said. "I'll compose, read and play cowboy songs with the kid next door. He sings and plays guitar, and he's fabulous. I'm going to bring some records we made down to New York and see if anyone's interested."

The strange duo recently tape-recorded a new Gould composition calculated to raise the eyebrows of his highbrow following. It's called "The Hired Man's Saturday Night".

Later, at work with the Winnipeg Symphony, Gould played one chord on the rehearsal piano and shook his head.

"Action's all wrong," he said. "If I played that tonight I'd ache all over tomorrow."

Instead he stood by the piano and sang the solo, burbling the intricate Bach score in perfect time and pitch. And the way he jumped up and down, waved his arms about . . .

It wasn't like Elvis, but neither was it much like old Johann Sebastian.



PIANIST GLENN GOULD
Hands bathed, tapping foot muffled.