

ABOUT GLENN GOULD STUDIO

by Walter Unger & Don Reagh

Take a look around- crane your necks- as you peer at the colours and features of this rather unusual performing space. You will notice some odd angles in the way the walls seem to be broken up. Both the design elements and the colours echo the basic design of the Broadcasting Centre exterior and this is intentional. The top architects of this building also designed this space and unified it to the bigger structure.

Glenn Gould Studio is a contemporary version of the European "shoebox" concert hall. The great European halls were often built by royal families and so we here too see some of those colours- the purple on your right- the regal blues, greens and reds.

The great concert halls of Europe had interesting niches in them, statues, elaborately sculpted plaster elements, frescoes, drapes, tapestries and even paintings with huge frames. These turned out to have an important acoustic role- a kind of "added value" no one originally expected. They dispersed the sound waves in important ways so that everyone in the hall could hear equally all the music. The textiles subtly dampened the sounds and helped give the hall an elegant reverberation. We don't have statues or frescoes here- but look at the tube-shaped elements, look at the unusual angles in the walls. They disperse the sound in the same way so that we have a uniformity of listening experiences throughout the hall. We don't have textiles on the walls, but some of the perpendicular cylinders have absorptive materials in them. You yourselves, along with the seat coverings and floor carpets, perform an important acoustic function here.

If you look at the wall behind the stage, it appears to be a curtain. It's not. Those aren't curtain folds you see. They are rounded plaster elements that have the comfortable look of a grand curtain. Most of them are totally reflective, others absorb sounds at certain frequencies.

Classical music loves wood and plaster. The performing floor is made of Canadian maple which is especially kind to live chamber music. The floor in the rest of the hall is oak. And then we have the three large oak-veneered wooden clouds up above the musicians, to help direct some of the sound back down to the musicians at a controlled time interval- it's very important for the performers to hear each other in a precise way. The large wooden clouds also direct the music into the hall for you to hear.

The reverberation time of **Glenn Gould Studio**, incidentally, is about 1.6 seconds- ideal for classical music.

We're all extremely proud of this hall and think it's the jewel of a remarkable Broadcasting Centre. If you haven't attended a concert here before you will notice at least two things about the sound. First, you'll notice the quality of silence. There is a kind of velvet aspect to the silence here. The Studio is extraordinarily quiet- and yet it's only 15 metres from a busy street. Secondly, you will notice the quality of sound- this place has an unusual reverberation of wonderfully wide musical breadth- a full sound. And you can hear this amazing warm sound all over the hall.

Walter Unger and Don Reagh were responsible for the development and eventual construction of Glenn Gould Studio through their responsibilities in the CBC Radio Facilities Planning area of the Broadcast Centre Project.