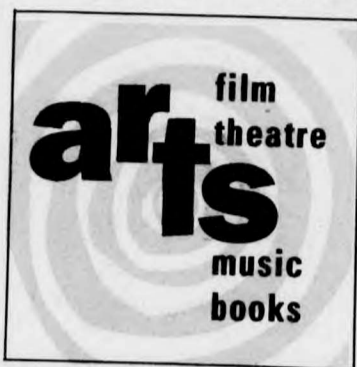


Variations on a man in Young's Glenn

by Soraya Mariam Peerbaye

Glenn Gould is best remembered for his lyrical interpretation of Bach, his sense of the balance and precision, and the emotion just under the surface. It is apt, then, that the play *Glenn* tries to reflect that sense in its



theatre

Glenn
written by David Young
Directed by Richard Rose
Du Maurier Theatre Centre

Performer, the Perfectionist and the Puritan. There are other personas as well: "Glenn liked to make up fanciful characters," says Horseberg. "He had imaginary critics; he had one called the Crankmeister." Perhaps *Glenn* could be subtitled "Variations on a man."

The play is biographical, but by no means linear. Each persona represents a different period in Gould's life, and as they converse, we have the dramatic equivalent of syncopation.

"Time is stretched, squeezed, interrupted, reversed, lapped and bent," comments Geoffrey Payzant in his foreword to *Glenn*.

"Glenn was interested in contrapuntal radio in the seventies," explains Horseberg. "He believed that people could listen to simultaneous

conversations and find the logic in the same way they listen to the four voices interact in a fugue." The actors, then, are sometimes orchestrated like instruments, their words gaining meaning with the emphasis of rhythm and counterpoint.

Horseberg tried to select recordings that reflected the aspects of Gould's personality as explored by Young. "I have a theory that although Glenn insisted on trotting out a lot of Bach, in fact he was a Romantic. Some of his most astonishing music is from the Romantic period. There is a particularly emotive Brahms intermezzo that traces the emotional life of the Puritan."

"Music is a messy subject to verbalize," points out Horseberg. If he and David Young meet their goals, the study of the man who elucidated the language of music will also be a study of the language of music.

Glenn opened on September 25, what would have been Gould's 60th birthday, and plays until October 17.

structure and its dialogue.

Don Horseburgh, the musical director, met with playwright David Young two years ago, and suggested that the dramatic structure be based on the Goldberg variations.

In every variation, there is a num-

ber of voices overlapping and interacting; similarly in the play, the char-

acter of Glenn is divided into four voices or personas: the Prodigy, the

Rocking *Rigoletto* buoys opera into the twenty-first Century

by Lilac Caña

When was the last time you went to the Opera? Did you ever feel the need to get whisked away, into an elevated atmosphere of High Tragedy, High Drama, near Dementia? Our very own Canadian Opera Company offers just that, more so now than ever before, with their 1992-93 season's opening production of Verdi's *Rigoletto*.

Opening night at the O'Keefe Centre (Sept. 19) heralded an electric shift for opera — as Toronto knows it — with this redefined classical tale of revenge and powerlust.

Even before the curtain rose, conductor Richard Bradshaw jarred the audience to their feet with a tune so disturbing, you had to think about its current meaning: the *O Canada* (in English only, at that).

An apt tone was set for what then unfolded as a stunning melodrama in three Acts. (Traditionally, four acts, but Director Nicholas Muni has thankfully eliminated much that is extraneous to this drama's execution.)

Based on a play by Victor Hugo called *Le Roi s'amuse*, the story of *Rigoletto* is as much about curses and superstition (Fate) as it is about the human capacity to lust (after revenge, power, what have you). Both elements are epitomized in *Rigoletto*, the crunch-backed court jester of the



Baritone Brent Ellis sings the title role of *Rigoletto* in the latest production of Verdi's classic. He's also runner-up for the Nose-putty appreciation award.

lecherous Duke of Mantua, who is both victim of an angry curse and a tragic failure at revenge. His love for his daughter Gilda cannot redeem his ill-fated plot to assassinate the man whom he believes has corrupted her.

These are curious but fitting themes for an "opener" performance. Verdi was an extreme moralist, and his *Rigoletto* seems to speak strikingly in our present climate. The air is thick with what sometimes feels like a curse (the Canadian economic and political spheres have been less than sunny). And no doubt, restless politicians have been sharpening their spears for the next rabid rat race.

between George Tynsin's set designs and the lighting employed by James F. Ingalls. If Act I's imposing block-like structures hinted at the sinister, then the heavy metal jungle gym in Act III really thrashed it out. Add to this some blood-red skies and lightning motifs — look for the "chevalier" image throughout — and we sail into glorious madness.

Rock & Roll video meets 19th-century *verismo*?

And singers who can act, as well as sing! Soprano Young Ok Shin sang an angelic Gilda; her "Caro Nome" wowed the cobwebs out of every baited ear with its controlled and even runs, clear tones and the

lightest of high A's. Mezzo-soprano Jean Stilwell's slutty Maddalena was met by tenor Jorge Lopez-Yanez's merrily rapacious Duke. (Light s&m bondage imagery played with, here.) Not to mention Ellis's convincing cripple — his performance was unaffected in any detrimental way from his seated position.

All this, just hours after an agreement was struck between the opera company and its orchestra. (Strike action on the part of the orchestra threatened to affect opening night, earlier in the week.)

This new *Rigoletto* destroys the nonsensical myth that the "general public" can't gain access to opera. Even starving students can get seats for as little as \$12. And that's *cheap*, for an experience that can buoy the senses to a higher (and deeper) level.

Just think what a new Opera and Ballet House would do to enhance Toronto's already lively art scene.



Rigoletto's daughter Gilda, played by soprano Young Ok Shin, dies beautifully. Those high A's stunned the audience into elation.

Play focuses on African-American tensions

by Frank Francis and David Bulengo

You don't have to be Black to understand the dilemma. *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, a play first written in 1963 by Christina Ama Ata Aidoo, comes to York for the first time.

The play explores one of the most critical issues facing two cultures today: the tension between African-Americans — who nostalgically perceive Africa — with their uninformed views of Africans-Americans.

A wonderfully classical, yet contemporary theme, which is played out in a straightforward plot. Ato Yawson, the main char-



acter, is a young Ghanaian who goes to the U.S. to study. He marries Eulalie Rush, a strong-willed Black-American woman from Harlem, without forewarn-

theatre

The Dilemma of a Ghost
presented by the
African Drama Club
October 15 & 16
at the Studio Theatre

ing his tradition-conscious family. This marriage is not received as well as Eulalie had expected. Tension builds to a peak of hopelessness, until a gap is bridged by Ato's uneducated, older generation mother.

Although the play openly deals with a difficult subject (it was written at a time when Black America demanded social and political change; when Africa was revered by many Black-American students as their place of ancestry), it also entertains the audience with spontaneous spurts of humour. Ama Ata Aidoo's employs her sensitivity of language to cunningly suggest the nature of her characters.

The Dilemma of a Ghost has been widely acclaimed by audiences worldwide.