

GLEN SHEPPARD

gtsheppard@gmail.com

www.glensheppard.com

+49 (0) 176 7077 8528

Profile

Glen Sheppard was born in Canada where he studied acting at the Ryerson Theatre School. His work as an artist comprises performance and film with a focus on music-based works. Beside his own works, Glen was revival director at the English National Opera and recently Director's Collaborator of Netia Jones at the Opéra National de Paris, where he returns October 2022. He works with musical source texts and deals with rituals and the consciousness of time, from which psychological choreographies emerge. Important works are: *Y is a question I keep asking* (2018), *ALEXANDRIA* (2019), a correction of Handel's *Il Trionfo, Ausser sich* (2019) a digital version (sound artist Tomas Nordmark) of *SALOME* and *Une mystification* (2020 and 2022) a valediction around the Bilitis material of Claude Debussy. Most recently, Glen has presented workshop performances of a durational overnight work *UNTIL THE WATERS FOAM UP* in cooperation with the Stiftung Reinbeckhallen art foundation and the support of Fonds Darstellende Künste, a very free adaptation of Dvorak's *RUSALKA*, as well as *I FURIOSI*, an adaptation of three Händel operas which he called a 'meta-text recital' using ethnographic video interview material at Uferstudios with the support of the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe.



Works

Y is a question I keep asking (2018)



Y IS A QUESTION I KEEP ASKING was made in a large warehouse gallery space called HB55 in Berlin-Lichtenberg. The idea is organized around three spatial transformations - in the deep background a gay sauna with mirrored walls peopled with nine male actors wearing bath towels around their waists and three female singers in toiles; in the foreground a deconstructed antiques shop which contained a string sextet and conductor. The audience assembled in a large adjoining room and immediately before the performance were brought into the larger space which had the same mirrored walls bathed in dim red light to a buried techno rendition of a Bach partita. As the audience entered, two of the male performers dressed in street clothes cruised and smoked and gently danced privately as the audience passed by, creating a secretive sexual cruising space. The first half of the performance was viewed through an initially entirely opaque then gradually dissipating haze until the figures in the deep distance became more clear before proceeding through the other spaces and eventually the audience itself. The music traces a line through quite recognisable operatic repertoire for female voice moving chronologically forwards and then again backwards to Monteverdi, with a prologue of Amanda Lear's 'My Alphabet' and a coda of ABBA's 'The Day Before You Came'. The work explores an idea of an 'eternal gay sauna' of western culture, whose ur-sin is an exclusion of women and is a reflection on the Western cultural inheritance as a fixed set of stories, as a material that is run out, that was never fit for purpose. The men psychologically police the appearance of drama and this policing of drama cements the ownership of the material assumed by the men, who through time put words in womens mouths. The setting intimates also a contiguous queer eternal of seepage in that the true content of this coded, bruised material provides us with a profound well of beauty in spite, which is honest not heroic and which, once spent, must only be aware of its own decline.

Extracts: <https://vimeo.com/433945766/5f903d261f>, <https://vimeo.com/328128690/4fea54efbc>





ALEXANDRIA (2019)



ALEXANDRIA is a 'correction' of a very early Handel oratorio (subtitled a 'moral cantata'), reconsidered as an 'immoral cantata', rejecting the original's mawkish Christian denouement in favour of an anti-moral promoting dissipation and withdrawal. Into the baroque original I interpolate songs from Lou Reed, Nico, Arthur Russell and Roxy Music, with a band of cembalo, saxophone and electric guitar to my own musical adaptations. The performance is expansive and melancholic, set in a kind of loft / gallery / living room, riffing additionally on a spate of exhibitions seen primarily in the US but also in Berlin around that time which seemed to me to be curated by an aging scene eulogizing itself amidst the backdrop of hopeful comparisons of Berlin of now or perhaps 5-10 years ago to the heyday of the Lower East Side scene of New York. The 'Alexandria' of the title references CP Cavafy's 'The God Forsakes Anthony' and reflects a liminal space of departure to be attained perhaps by crossing a psychological threshold.

Extract: <http://www.glensheppard.com/a-l-e-x-a-n-d-r-i-a--il-trionfo-del-tempo-e-del-disinganno.html>

















AUSSER SICH is a monologue rendering of Richard Strauss' SALOME. The score has been digitally digested into midi and partially recomposed by collaborator Tomas Nordmark. My feeling about SALOME since early teenagehood has been that Salome's hunger is for 'more', and that by kissing the mouth of this 'prophet' she desires to devour all knowledge. In my reading, Wilde and Strauss unleashed a kind of Lulu, opened up a kind of Pandora's Box in treating the character of Salome, which then proceeded to devour the century that followed: trench warfare, futurism, decolonisation and digital dystopia, AIDS. Raised atheist, I lack the learned aversion to Salome as assassin of the Prophet. For me, the finale of the opera is tragic - Salome is opera, and perhaps the 20th century's also, insofar as it was the chaotic fruition of European culture's fatal flaws, avatar. The performance took place simultaneously in a small room with live video feed into an adjacent room for additional audience. The singer performing Salome was accompanied by two male actor-dancers. The environment was a kind of colonial wellness retreat, somewhere in Africa or East Asia. At the time of Salome's dance, the door separating the back and front spaces was opened by the male actor-dancers, whose dance took them into the front room before separating them on either side.

Extract: <http://www.glensheppard.com/aussersich.html>









UNE MYSTIFICATION is a 'valediction' constructed around the Bilitis material of Claude Debussy and Pierre Louÿs. Louÿs's 'Les chansons de Bilitis' was a book of poems that he claimed to have translated from a long lost - fictitious - ancient Greek courtesan of the same name. The book reflects the biography of this invented courtesan, who first leaves a bucolic adolescence in Pamphylia for Lesbos where she shares a lover with Sappho, then along to Cyprus, where she ends her days, melancholic and spent. The singer in the performance, implicitly a kind of 'Bilitis', has only the forged Bilitis material with which to express herself, and a tension mounts as she approaches the final of the three songs, which contains the line, 'les satyres sont mort' (the satyrs are dead). The space is deconstructed, somewhere between a domestic space that has been packed up or a waiting room, with too many lamps and rolled up rugs and covered furniture. The tone of the performance is of a ritual without object, a night that must be passed by the four performers without a concrete or evident outcome. Stylistically it is anchored in 1976, the year that Jacques Rivette's DUELLE was released, whose tone of ritual and magic is cited. 1976 as visual anchor is also important as at the ebbing end of the first brief period since antiquity when homosexuality was not fatal. The performance incorporates poems from Frank O'Hara and CP Cavafy.

UNE MYSTIFICATION has been presented by BAM! The Berlin Festival for Contemporary Musiktheater in April 2022 and was originally created in isolation during the summer Solstice of 2020.

Musical extract: <https://vimeo.com/715684023/205f59ecc7>

Poetic extract: <https://vimeo.com/715311263/69d8c09185>





Until the waters foam up (2023)



Until the waters foam up is an experience of night, a ritual of passing time, a performance incorporating music and video in which visual events emerge seamlessly from a hyper-realistic dreamscape that is haunted by the opera RUSALKA. RUSALKA, as a fable, illustrates, according to me, the perils of transgression and warns against Otherness. My response to RUSALKA is informed by my experience of a sexual coming of age at the height of the AIDS epidemic. I describe this experience as a kind of 'bruise' and imagine that the performers who we spend this night with are and, at the same time, are not the characters of RUSALKA. These characters are watching themselves, the inevitability of this didactic warning undoing them playing out in front of their eyes as they live it: analogous, but somewhat cryptically independent of the material, Until the waters foam up responds to this. I used the opportunity to stage the night in real time to at once incite a prone experience of living bruised and suggest a recognition of persistence and survival in spite, albeit absent platitudes.

Until the waters foam up has been presented in cooperation with the Stiftung Reinbeckhallen, with Prozessförderung from the Fonds Darstellende Künste.

Image trailer: <http://www.glensheppard.com/until-the-waters-foam-up.html>







I Furiosi (2023)



Inspired by a Guardian article about a young man's shift into alt-right thinking, "I Furiosi" explores the grievances felt by individuals globally, exacerbated by wealth disparities and digital communication. Pankaj Mishra's "Age of Anger" delves into these grievances and Nietzsche's concept of "the unfinished problem of civilization." The performance focuses on those with the power to shape society, delving into their role in creating the world perceived as unjust by others. The work uses as its avatars the secondary characters from Handel's operas "Orlando," "Ariodante," and "Alcina," all based on Ludovico Ariosto's "Orlando Furioso." The piece highlights the fear-driven conformity of society and aims to promote the revolutionary possibility of sensual experience and pleasure amidst societal anxieties.

I Furiosi has been presented at Uferstudios, Berlin, with funding from the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe.

Excerpt: <https://vimeo.com/862698473/db163e67f7?share=copy>

Full documentation: http://www.glensheppard.com/ifuriosi_doc.html

