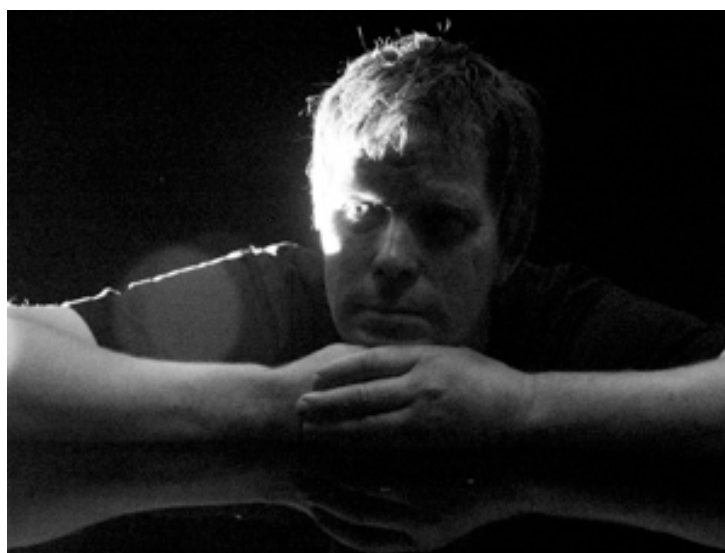


## Glenn Erik Haugland

### The composer of Rebekka

Glenn Erik Haugland (1961) was born on Long Island, USA and moved to Os (pr. Bergen), Norway at the age of 11. He studied at the Norwegian State Academy of Music with teachers Olav Anton Thommesen and Lasse Thoresen. His career started in 1985 as a composer with emphasis on Electro-acoustic music. Soon however he started working within music theatre, in a broader sense of the field. Experiments within performance art, "theatrical concerts", and music theatre for children were important for Haugland's development as musical dramatist. Along with Heidi Tronsmo and Ståle Tråsdahl they formed the music theatre group Opera Omnia in 1990. Insights and experiences from composing and staging over 30 productions lead in 2000 - 01 to opera successes "PoY!" and "Hulda and Garborg". Whilst "PoY!" has been performed over 130 times all over the world, "Hulda and Garborg" was a public and critic success in Norway (nominated to the Nordic Music Prize in 2004) In several ways a breakthrough in Haugland's career.

As president for the Norwegian Society of Composers from 1997 to 2001, he was a warm spokesperson for the arts. The last couple of years Haugland has had success with work for among others Bergen and Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra. He is now working on commissions from the Rascher Saxophone Quartet and Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra as well as new opera projects.



*I've worked in the field of music theatre ever since I studied composition in 80-85. I quite soon got attracted to the powerfulness of combining music and the stage performance. The first work I did was concert-stagings. Avant-garde, non-epic, quite close to performance art*

*The first real attempt to do an "epic" music-drama, was in children operas - 95: Guri and the Wind, 96: Guri's Fiesta and The Wild World of Vera. The two first were collaborations and more or less musicals. "Vera" is on the other hand a full-blood music drama. Five years later I finally found a satisfying artistic approach to epic work with children opera PoY and chamber opera Hulda&Garborg.*

*I have been writing for the voice in all kinds of different styles. From extended voice usage, to traditional song writing. More or less conscious about the effect of melody on lyrics. During the years I've been seeking simplicity in vocal writing. Not for to make it easy for the singers, but because of a growing sensitivity as to how powerful a tool musical treatment of a text is! Through years of experimenting, I now see it as completely possible to tell a theatrical story through a "talkative" approach to song writing (you can see very much the same going on in Berios development as a song/opera composer).*

*As almost every other composer, I also have worked with instrumental pieces. But I tend to "stage" my pieces as a series of "real-life" incidents, before I actually put them in to music. Not very unlike programatic music, but not very alike either. I am not all interested in the "klang" oriented main-stream form for music writing. I find it often pointless.*

*Which leads to my strategy for writing "Rebekka". An approach I used for the first time in the children opera 3x3 (DNS, Bergen, 2005). After finally getting the libretto right (a composers first draft), my first musical instinct was to "compose the text". The main idea was to get the flow right, and look at melodic possibilities from a psychological angle. The next step was to exploit musical opportunities. This changed some of the vocal writing, but surprisingly enough opened for several moments of pure music. Like opera composers from the past, I am concerned about hearing the text. Not only heard, but also understood music wise. I think one really has to understand Norwegian as to capture everything I try to do the words of Rebekka. Then of course one could protest, and say that great art goes without local/culture (or even lingual) understanding. But I think not. I think the best music and operas are very specific and closely related to the environment they are created in. Their timeless success spring out of sophisticated communication that only can be found in the specific.*

**Glenn Erik Haugland on the topic of writing opera.**