



ALEX HARDING ARCHIVE

(HARDING)

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Catalogued by Barbara Vesey, March 2022**

HARDING

Alex Harding Archive

1960-2006

Name of Creator: Harding, Alex (1949-2022) playwright, composer and performer

Extent: 5 boxes, 1 oversized volume, 23 posters, 1 artwork

Administrative/Biographical History: Playwright, composer and actor Alex Harding (1949-2022) was born in England on 15 October 1949. A founding member and musical director of Gay Sweatshop Theatre Company, Harding is quoted as saying 'Drew Griffiths, who was the backbone and founder of Gay Sweatshop, wanted to form a gay theatre company where we could present alternatives to audiences and help break down their fears and prejudices.'

Harding composed original music for the piece 'As Time Goes By', first produced for the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) conference held in Nottingham in 1977. Harding's next project was 'Double Exposure', a collaboration with Alan Pope, another founding member of Gay Sweatshop. The following year Harding and Pope collaborated again on 'Point Blank', a cabaret directed by Martin Sherman (who wrote the play 'Bent' produced in 1980). The same year also produced 'The Dear Love of Comrades', a play by Noel Grieg with music by Harding. Harding and Pope's final collaboration was 'Layers', a musical that had a sell-out season at the ICA (Institute of Contemporary Arts) Theatre, London, in 1979. It starred a young Michael Cashman, later Baron Cashman.

In 1980 Harding became a musical director of the Bloolips Theatre Company. During this time he created his alter-ego drag character 'Dotty'. He performed with the Bloolips for two seasons.

Alex Harding moved to Australia in 1984 and became an Australian citizen in 1985. His first Australian credit was 'Not Quite Sixty Minutes', a cabaret written and performed by him at the 1985 Gay Mardi Gras in Sydney. The following year saw him appear in, and contribute to, 'Love, Sex and Romance', an umbrella event during the Gay Mardi Gras. That same year Harding also contributed to 'Acid 'n' Tonic', another gay cabaret.

When Harding composed the title song for his musical 'Only Heaven Knows' in 1986, it was Drew Griffiths he was thinking of: 'His pride and his passion was an inspiration to the original members of the company.' Harding followed 'Only Heaven Knows' with the play 'Blood and Honour', which opened at the Belvoir Street Theatre on 07 February 1990. Harding's lover of 15 years, David E. Thompson, died of AIDS five months after the premiere of 'Blood and Honour'. The play was written for him and is dedicated to him. The play went on to win the 1990 UN Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Award for Drama.

In 1991 Harding appeared in a one-man musical, 'Beauty and the Beat', which was part of the 1991 Gay and Lesbian Arts Festival. It was written and

directed by Rex Lay, a former Harding collaborator from his Bloodlips days, with songs by Harding and Lay. Sydney Theatre Company then commissioned Harding to write the play 'Three'. It was given a full-day workshop and an evening open reading under the auspices of STC's research and development wing on 13 May 1993. In 1993 Harding also worked as the pianist with a group called Body Tales in a piece called 'The Will'. In the mid-1990s Harding was commissioned by the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras to write and workshop a two-hander. Called 'Beloved', it was based on the death-cell letters of the bushranger Captain Scott (Moonlite) and his love for another man in the gang.

Two of Harding's one-act plays, 'The Reunion' and 'Kaleidoscope', were mounted as part of the Queer Fringe by Lookout Theatre, in a program of four plays in February 1996.

On 18 February 1996 Harding premiered his one-man cabaret 'Just One More and Then I'll Go!' at the Stables Theatre, Sydney. Later in the year Harding teamed with director Mary Haire for a series of Sunday afternoon cabaret shows at the Tilbury Hotel. He followed this with 'Harding in the Soup', a Sunday night gig playing piano at Betty's Soup Kitchen.

In 1999 Harding's 'Family Secrets, Sheltered Worlds' was included in a season of three short one-act plays at the Stables Theatre under the title 'Hungry'.

'Walk down the Avenue', a three-character musical, was to be a Sydney Mardi Gras production for 1999, but the cost was too great so it was pulled at the last minute. Several songs from the show appear on Jason Stephenson's CD 'Found' (2000).

Harding returned to the UK in late 2000, working for a time as Activities Co-Ordinator in an aged care facility outside London.

Alex Harding lived his life as an out and proud gay man. It didn't worry him that he was labelled a gay or queer writer. 'There's nothing that would bore me to tears more than to write for an exclusive heterosexual audience,' he says. 'I write for a gay audience because I'm gay. I'm coming from a gay experience, my experience.' 'Only Heaven Knows' is seen as ground-breaking, having put gay life centre stage with honesty, compassion and love. It is considered an Australian classic.

Custodial History: Deposited with Bishopsgate Institute by Allison Harding, 7 March 2022.

Scope and Content: Scrapbooks, posters, CDs, video cassette tapes, photographs, playscripts, musical scores, correspondence, flyers, publicity materials, press clippings and reviews regarding the life and work of the playwright, composer and performer Alex Harding (1949-2022). Includes material regarding Harding as co-founder of Gay Sweatshop Theatre Company and their shows 'The Jingle Ball' (1976) and 'As Time Goes By'

(1977); Harding's musical productions and performances with Alan Pope in revues including 'Double Exposure' (1979), 'Point Blank' (1980) and 'Layers' (1982); his work as a member of Bloodlips drag troupe (1983-1984); plays and revues from Harding's years in Australia, including those produced for Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras such as 'Acid 'n' Tonic' (1986), 'Only Heaven Knows' (written for Australia's bicentennial, 1988), 'Blood and Honour' (1990), 'Beauty and the Beat' (1991) and 'Beloved' (1998). Also material regarding his lover David E Thompson, a theatrical producer and champion of the arts who died of AIDS in 1990; Harding's one-man show 'Just One More and Then I'll Go!' (1996) and his audio CD (with Jason Stephenson) 'Found' (2002), [1960-2006]

System of Arrangement:

No further arrangement required.

Language/scripts of material:

English

Access conditions:

OPEN

Copying conditions:

Photocopying, scanning and digital photography (without flash) is permitted for research purposes on completion of the Library's Copyright Declaration form and with respect to current UK copyright law.

Finding Aids:

Copy of handlist available in researcher's area.

Rules and Conventions:

Compiled in compliance with General International Standard Archival Description, ISAD(G), second edition, 2000; National Council on Archives Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names, 1997.

HARDING/1 Scrapbook 1960-1982

Large (102-page, 32x30cm) photo album/scrapbook with press cuttings, flyers, publicity, photographs and other memorabilia covering the period from Harding's school reports (1960) to 1982

Includes:

- press cuttings regarding Switchboard (1976)
- flyers, publicity and press reviews for Gay Sweatshop Theatre Company (1976)
- material from productions including 'The Jingle Ball' (1976); 'As Time Goes By' (1977); 'Double Exposure' [with Alan Pope] (1979); 'The Dear Love of Comrades' (performed in the UK and US); an evening with Alex Harding (at Gay's the Word); 'Point Blank' (1980); an evening of his own music called 'Harlequinade'; 'Jimmy Riddle' (Arts Lab, with sound and music by Harding, 1981); 'Showette'; 'Layers' (at the ICA, 1982)

OPEN

HARDING/2 Scrapbook 1983-1986

Blue photo album/scrapbook (26x32cm) with press cuttings, correspondence, photographs, greetings cards, flyers, production stills and other publicity materials from Harding's time as a member (Dotty Bloop) – and musical director – of Bloop, and, after he moved to Australia, as a journalist and drag artiste, [1983-1986]

Includes:

- production materials for the Bloop shows 'Yum Yum' (1983); 'Odds 'n Sods' (1983-1984); 'Sticky Buns' (1984)
- journalism and photographs from Sydney Gay Mardi Gras (1985, 1986)
- productions of the musical reviews 'Acid 'n' Tonic' and 'Love, Sex & Romance' (1986)

OPEN

HARDING/3 Scrapbook 1986-1988

Black photo album/scrapbook (26x30cm) with press cuttings, photographs, production stills, press reviews and other publicity materials from Harding's work including Sydney Gay

Mardi Gras (1987, 1988) and early workshops for his musical 'Only Heaven Knows' (1987-1988), written specifically for the 1988 (Australian) Bicentennial celebration. Set in Sydney between the years 1944 and 1957, it featured a score of 12 original songs, [1986-1988]
OPEN

HARDING/4 Scrapbook 1988

Clear-covered scrapbook (24x30cm) with photographs, production stills and press cuttings regarding Alex Harding's life, performances and plays including 'Only Heaven Knows' (1988) and his successful application for Australian citizenship, [1988]
OPEN

HARDING/5 Scrapbook 1989-1990

Clear-covered scrapbook (26x32cm) with photographs, press cuttings, programmes and other publicity materials regarding Alex Harding's performances and plays including 'Only Heaven Knows' (Playbox Theatre, 1989); Sydney Gay Mardi Gras (1989, 1990), [1989-1990]

HARDING/6 Scrapbook 1990

Pink display book (24x31cm) with press cuttings and publicity stills regarding Harding's play 'Blood and Honour', [1990]
OPEN

HARDING/7 Scrapbook

Grey photo album/display book (24x31cm) with photographs and correspondence regarding Harding's life and work including 'Only Heaven Knows' and 'Blood and Honour'. Also includes the obituaries written for and intimate photographs of the Harding's lover David E Thompson (1949-1990) when he was dying of AIDS, [c.1990]
APPLY TO ARCHIVIST

HARDING/8 Scrapbook

1972-1990

Blue scrapbook (25x32cm), [1972-1990]

Includes:

- photographs
- typescript diary entries (1972)
- draft lyrics and poems (1979)
- playscript ('All the Way with Humpity Hay', 1985)
- press cuttings regarding productions of 'Only Heaven Knows' (1990)
- Harding's obituary of David Elliot Thompson ('Outrage' magazine, September 1990)
- photographs of Thompson
- invitation to a celebration of Thompson's life (14 October 1990)
- complete issue of 'Out: a journal of gay & lesbian art', No. 1 (Spring 1990)
- professional photographs (by Jamie Dunbar) of Alex Harding and his dog B.J.
- Harding's invitation to, and speech given at, an award ceremony hosted by Human Rights Australia where Harding's play 'Blood and Honour' was nominated in the drama category

APPLY TO ARCHIVIST

HARDING/9 Scrapbook

1990-1991

Black scrapbook, [1990-1991]

Includes:

Press cuttings, programmes, photographs and production stills regarding Harding.

Includes material regarding:

- publicity material for Harding's play 'Beauty and the Beat'
- Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras (1991)
- Harding winning the 1990 Australian UN Human Rights Award for his play 'Blood and Honour'
- the Australian AIDS Memorial Quilt (includes a quilt dedicated to David Thompson)

OPEN

HARDING/10 Scrapbook

1991-1993

Black scrapbook containing correspondence, press cuttings, programmes regarding Harding and his work [1991-1993]

Includes:

- programme for Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras (1992)
- 'Out-2: a journal of gay and lesbian writing on the arts' (Vol. 2, Summer 1991)
- publicity for a production of 'Only Heaven Knows' at Theatre Sagitta (North Adelaide)
- the editing of David Thompson's diaries project (Playbox Theatre and Sidney Myer Fund, Melbourne)
- script for 'Blood and Honour'
- interview with Alex Harding in 'Burn' magazine
- papers regarding the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Choir
- reviews of 'The Will' in which Alex performed on the piano
- publicity for a reading of Alex's third play, 'Three'.

OPEN

HARDING/11 Scrapbook

1994-1995

Black scrapbook containing press cuttings, photographs, programmes and other material regarding Alex Harding's life and work, [1994-1995]

Includes:

- interview of Alex in the Sydney Star Observer (25 February 1994)
- correspondence regarding Alex's 'interest in the clinical trial of a candidate HIV-vaccine' (February 1994)
- press release regarding the release of a single called 'Fly Away (For David)' by Alex Harding, with proceeds to the Australian AIDS Memorial Quilt Project
- poster, script for and review of Alex's sketch, 'The Reunion'
- newspaper memorial to David Thompson (Star Observer, 15 July 1994)

- Alex's press column 'Tales from the Backroom'
- NSW Writers' Centre
- Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras (1995)
- a production of 'Only Heaven Knows' at Stables Theatre, Sydney (1995)

OPEN

HARDING/12 Scrapbook

1995

Red scrapbook containing press cuttings, photographs, programmes, greetings cards, correspondence and other material regarding a production of Alex Harding's play with music 'Only Heaven Knows' at the Stables Theatre in Sydney. Also invitation to the 8th Annual Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras Awards Night; Off The Page Short Play Competition flyer; press reviews of a show called 'Nowadays' featuring the actor/singer who had the lead in 'Only Heaven Knows', [1995]

OPEN

HARDING/13 Scrapbook

1988-1989

Black scrapbook containing press cuttings, correspondence, programmes and other material regarding Alex Harding and David Thompson, [1988-1989]

Includes:

- issues of the Australian magazine, 'Campaign' (No. 148, August 1988; No. 155, February 1989), the latter featuring an article written by Alex Harding's partner, David E Thompson
- typescript 'The Gay Sensibility in the Arts' written by Alex Harding for a discussion forum (02 July 1988)
- programme for and typescript review (by David Thompson) of A Fundamental Attack: an exhibition of Lesbian and Gay Art (31 January – 23 February 1989)
- press interview with Alex Harding, The Age (01 February 19889)
- articles by David Thompson, including, 'Gay & Lesbian Theatre: Does it have a future?' and 'International challenge to Australian theatre'

- press cutting (photocopied), interview with David Thompson, Lowdown magazine (June 1989)
 - booklet, Australian & New Zealand Theatre Record: Index 1988 (64pp)
 - copies of David Thompson's column 'In Print' for the Sydney Star Observer
- OPEN**

HARDING/14 Scrapbook

1998

Black scrapbook containing press cuttings, correspondence, greetings cards, programmes and other material regarding the life and work of Alex Harding, [1998]

Includes:

- flyer for the School of Arts Cafe
- images of Alex's beloved dog, B.J., who died 06 February 1998
- press and publicity for Alex's show with Jason Stephenson, 'Just One More and Then I'll Go'
- publicity for the release of a single from Alex's show 'Only Heaven Knows', recorded by David Campbell
- programme and guest pass for Sydney Cabaret Convention (29 June-04 July)
- script for Alex's play 'Three' (c.1993/1994)
- workshop draft for Alex's play 'Betty's (a comedy)'
- invitation for Alex to the New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards (14 September 1998)
- typescript first draft of Alex's play 'Beloved'
- publicity and press reviews for an 'all new production' of Alex Harding's 'Only Heaven Knows', New Theatre, Sydney (November 1998)

OPEN

HARDING/15 Scrapbook

1998-1999

Blue scrapbook containing press cuttings, correspondence, greetings cards, programmes and other material regarding the life and work of Alex Harding, [1998-1999]

Includes:

- typescript second draft of Alex's play 'Beloved (Based on the death cell letters of Andrew G. Scott, alias Captain Moonlite)
 - press reviews of 'Only Heaven Knows'
 - publicity for a production of 'Beloved'
 - handwritten diary notes for 31 December 1998
 - press reviews of 'Hungry', a triptych of short plays including one by Alex Harding entitled 'Secret Worlds, Sheltered Lives'
- OPEN**

HARDING/16 Scrapbook

1999-2002

Black scrapbook containing press cuttings, correspondence, greetings cards, programmes and other material regarding the life and work of Alex Harding, [1999-2002]

Includes:

- publicity and press regarding a film made of Harding's play 'The Reunion'
- press review of readings by local playwrights, including Harding reading from his play 'Beloved'
- correspondence regarding a staging of Alex Harding's work, 'Walk Down the Avenue'
- leaflet for the Gay Games VI held in Sydney 2002
- publicity colour/sepia photographs of Alex Harding and Jason Stephenson for the release of their CD 'Found'
- press reviews of 'Found'
- press release regarding a re-release of the original 1995 Australian cast recording of 'Only Heaven Knows' featuring David Campbell
- programme for Alex Harding's one-man show, 'Just One More and Then I'll Go', Oval House Theatre, London (21 October 2000)
- publicity for a production of 'Only Heaven Knows' at the Midsumma Festival at Prahran, Victoria, Australia

OPEN

HARDING/17 Press and publicity

1995-1996

Press cuttings, correspondence, greetings cards, programmes, publicity and other

material regarding the life and work of Alex Harding, [1995-1996]

Includes:

- programme from the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras 1996
- press release, reviews and publicity regarding Alex Harding's one-man show, 'Just One More and Then I'll Go!' at the Stables Theatre, Sydney (17 February–10 March 1996)
- correspondence regarding the inclusion of Alex Harding's play 'Blood and Honour' in an anthology of Australian lesbian and gay writing (20 December 1995)

OPEN

HARDING/18 Press and publicity

1996-1997

Press cuttings, correspondence, programmes, publicity and other material regarding the life and work of Alex Harding, [1996-1997]

Includes:

- review of the anthology Australian Gay & Lesbian Plays which included Alex Harding's 'Blood and Honour'
- flyer and publicity for an exhibition celebrating 25 years of The Stables Theatre at the Art Gallery of New South Wales
- press interview with Alex Harding and Mary Haire regarding their cabaret show at the Tilbury Hotel, Woolloomooloo, Sydney (Campaign magazine, November 1996)
- publicity for Alex Harding's 'Hark the Angels Singing' at the Pride Centre, Surry Hills, NSW (30 November 1996)
- printed '[screenplay] Treatment Draft #1' of 'Only Heaven Knows' (22 January 1997)
- flyer for 'Harding in the Soup' – Alex's performances Sundays at Betty's Soup Kitchen, Darlinghurst, Sydney
- review of the CD of Harding's show 'Just One More and Then I'll Go', Show Music magazine [New York], Spring 1997
- flyer for Harding's 'Walk Down the Avenue', Griffin Theatre Company at The Stable Theatre, Sydney (August 1997)

OPEN

HARDING/19 Video cassette tapes 1982-1998

Nine video cassette tapes, [1982-1998]

Includes tapes labelled:

1. Layers [1982]
2. Gay Immigration Task Force Cabaret 1986
3. Blood and Honour [1990]
4. Beauty and the Beat, Alex Harding, Belvoir St Feb. 1991 – Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras
5. Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras
6. Only Heaven Knows by Alex Harding, The Stables, Sydney, 26 February 1995
- 7-8. Only Heaven Knows, Sydney Opera House, 13.5.95 (2 copies)
9. Jason and Alex in Concert 1998/Jason and Alex Sydney Cabaret Convention 1998

OPEN

HARDING/20 Correspondence 1974-2006

Miscellaneous correspondence including a drawing 'For Alex' signed [?Toni?] Smith; certificate from Fo Guang Shan Religious Affairs Committee 'with Appreciation to Alex Harding' for 'composing such an enlightening song', [1974-2006]

OPEN

HARDING/21 Gay Sweatshop/'As Time Goes By' 1975-1977

Photographs and press cuttings from Harding's work with Drew Griffiths and Gay Sweatshop Theatre Company, including Gay Sweatshop's production of 'As Time Goes By', [1975-1977]

OPEN

HARDING/22 'Double Exposure', 'The Dear Love of Comrades', 'Point Blank' and 'Layers' 1978-1979

Photographs, CD, press cuttings regarding Alex Harding's shows with Alan Pope: 'Double Exposure', 'Point Blank' and 'Layers', plus Harding's 'The Dear Love of Comrades', [1978-1979]

OPEN

- HARDING/23** **Boolips, 'Jimmy Riddle' and Cilla Black** **1980-1985**
- Photographs, flyers, poster, programmes and press reviews regarding Alex Harding's time with Boolips and his show, 'Jimmy Riddle'. Also press cutting about Cilla Black's back catalogue. Includes material from Boolips' shows 'Sticky Buns' and 'Living Leg-Ends', performed in New York, and 'Odds 'n' Sods' at the Almeida, London, [1980-1985]
OPEN
- HARDING/24** **'Acid 'n' Tonic'** **1985-1986**
- Press cuttings regarding the revue 'Not Quite Sixty Minutes' at the Gay Mardi Gras Festival, Sydney and Harding's revue, 'Acid 'n' Tonic'. Includes press cutting about the murder of Harding's friend, co-founder of Gay Sweatshop and fellow playwright, Drew Griffiths, [1985-1986]
OPEN
- HARDING/25** **'Only Heaven Knows'** **1986**
- Publicity, photographs, press reviews regarding Harding's musical, 'Only Heaven Knows', [1986]
OPEN
- HARDING/26** **'Blood and Honour'** **1989**
- Congratulatory cards sent to Harding on the opening of his play, 'Blood and Honour', [1989]
OPEN
- HARDING/27** **'Beauty and the Beat'** **1991-1993**
- Photographs and flyer from Harding's show, 'Beauty and the Beat' (1991). Also press cuttings quoting Harding regarding Gay Mardi Gras 1993, [1991-1993]
OPEN
- HARDING/28** **'Beloved' and 'Just One More ...'** **1995-1996**
- Publicity, flyers, programme, and other material regarding Harding's shows 'Beloved' and 'Just One More and Then I'll Go!'

Includes CD recording of 'Just One More ...',
[1995-1996]

OPEN

HARDING/29 Scripts and scores

1982-1999

Playscripts (typed) and musical scores for songs, plays and revues by Alex Harding, [1982-1999]

Includes:

- full script, programme and flyer for 'Layers' (1982)
- full script, programme notes and full score of 'Only Heaven Knows' (1988)
- published text of 'Only Heaven Knows' (revised edition, 1997)
- script for 'Blood and Honour' (c.1989)
- two drafts of 'Walk Down the Avenue' (c.1999)

OPEN

HARDING/30 Posters

1976-1998

Twenty posters, one painting, one drawing and one photograph regarding

Includes posters regarding:

1. Alex Harding's and Alan Pope's revue, 'Layers: A Musical Romance'
2. 'Only Heaven Knows' – for the 1998 production, signed by friends (perhaps some members of the cast?)
3. The CD release of 'Just One More and Then I'll Go!'
4. Gay Times Festival, 'presented by the men of Gay Sweatshop', Drill Hall, London (c.1976)
5. 'Jimmy Riddle: a new play by Peter Cox [...] Incidental Music by Alex Harding' (1981)
6. Gay Sweatshop Presents a play by Noël Greig and Drew Griffiths: 'As Time Goes By' at the ICA (1977)
7. 'Double Exposure', with Alex Harding and Alan Pope (1978)
8. Gay Sweatshop Presents 'Indiscreet ... The Revenge of Mr X' (n.d.)
9. Alan Pope & Alex Harding in Point Blank: a cabaret of their own devising, directed by Martin Sherman (1978)

10. oversized black-and-white photograph of Alex Harding, Alan Pope, David E Thompson and a fourth man, (c.1978)
11. Sydney Gay Mardi Gras (1986)
12. framed poster publicising Jason Stephenson & Alex Harding in Concert (c.1998)
13. 'Love, Sex and Romance ... from the troupe that brought you "not quite sixty minutes" and "acid and tonic"' (1986)
14. Mid Summa Festival, Melbourne (1989)
15. 'D.E.T. [David E Thompson] Enterprises present Coming Up ... a new play by Kate Phelps' (c.1981)
16. 'Only Heaven Knows' at The Playhouse Theatre, Sydney Opera House (1995)
17. 'Aladdin' with Cilla Black, Gareth Hunt and Bob Carolgees, Wimbledon Theatre – choreography by Alex Harding (December 1989-January 1990)
18. club night at DCM, Sydney (n.d.)
19. ACT UP poster with quote from Vito Russo (c.1990)
20. film 'Squeeze' by Richard Turner (1980)
21. original artwork in pastels by a friend of Harding's (Toni Smith)
22. very large poster (120x176cm) for a festival – in German
23. framed painting in oils by Toni Smith

OPEN

HARDING/31 Dotty Bloopip: Oil Painting by Toni Smith 1990

Oil painting of Harding as Dotty Bloopip by Toni Smith, New Zealand (54 x 54cm) (1990)
OPEN