

DanceMotion USA

Collection Identifier

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Dates

bulk

Extent

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Agency History

Brooklyn Academy of Music presented its first performance in 1861 and has been the premier performing arts center in Brooklyn since then. From its Victorian beginnings to its contemporary, multi-cultural present and its multi-media future, BAM has survived for almost 150 years by remaining open to change and reflecting the development and evolution of its community and the artists it represents. The first BAM facility at 176-194 Montague Street was originally conceived by the Philharmonic Society of Brooklyn as a home for its concerts. It housed a large theater seating 2,200, a smaller concert hall, dressing and chorus rooms and a vast "baronial" kitchen. The Academy of Music presented both amateur and professional music and theater productions. Performers included Ellen Terry, Edwin Booth, Tomas Salvini and Fritz Kreisler. After the Academy burned to the ground on the morning of November 30, 1903, The New York Times eulogized its achievements, "In short, there has hardly been a great public movement of national import but the old Academy has been at one time or another its principal focus." Plans were quickly made to rebuild at the edge of Brooklyn's business district in the fashionable neighborhood of Fort Greene. The cornerstone was laid at 30 Lafayette in 1906 and a series of opening events were held in the fall of 1908 culminating with a grand gala evening featuring Geraldine Farrar and Enrico Caruso in a Metropolitan Opera production of Gounod's Faust. The Met would continue to present seasons in Brooklyn through 1921. It was during one of the engagements of the final Met season at BAM that Caruso, while performing in L'Elisir d'Amore, suffered a throat hemorrhage and filled "handkerchief after handkerchief with blood" before quitting the stage. Two weeks later, he gave the last performance of his career at the Met. After World War II, Brooklyn shared the growing problems of other urban centers throughout America, and Brooklyn Academy of Music's audience and support base declined. Language classes and martial arts instruction were booked into performance spaces. A school for boys held classes in the partitioned grand ballroom. By the time Mr. Lichtenstein was appointed Executive Director, the programs and facilities needed rethinking. During the 30 years that Mr. Lichtenstein has been BAM's leader, the Academy has experienced a complete

renaissance, and is now recognized internationally as a leading presenter of contemporary performing arts. BAM's current programming consists of the Next Wave Festival each fall a spring season of opera, theater and dance; an Education and Humanities Program, and a variety of community programs. BAM recently opened the BAMcafé in its third-floor Lepercq Space (which includes free music and other programming), and the on-site BAM Rose Cinemas in November 1998.

Historical/Biographical Note

The DanceMotion USA[®] pilot program launched in 2010, with international residencies by US companies Urban Bush Women, ODC/Dance, and Evidence, A Dance Company. That initial launch has served as a model for cultural exchange initiatives and was the first major international dance program supported by the US Department of State in more than 20 years. It reached global audiences of more than 15,000 people during residencies to 16 cities in nine countries within three world regions - Southeast Asia, South America, and Africa. Since its launch, 17 American dance companies have traveled to Sub-Saharan and Northern Africa, South America, the Middle East, the Iberian Peninsula, Eastern Europe, Eurasia, and Central, South, and Southeast Asia. Beginning in 2012, DanceMotion USA[®] also brings foreign artists back to the US to collaborate with American artists, expanding the cross-cultural exchange. To date, the program has engaged more than 100,000 people in 47 countries (and an additional 20 million people through digital platforms and social media) and offered more than 500 workshops.

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