

BAM Audio and Video Collection

Collection Identifier

AV_Audio_&_video_Collection

Dates

after 1970 inclusive

Extent

200 linear feet

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

This collection houses audio and video of BAM performances and other programming. Newer recordings are born-digital, and others originated in a range of analog formats. Earliest recordings are from 1970's, however consistent documentation video of performances begins in the early 1980's.

Scope & Content

The BAM Audio and Video Collection includes documentation of: main stage performances; Education & Humanities programming; community events; non-performance documentation (such as interviews with BAM's leaders and artists, and BAM press); press videos featuring BAM artists and events; and commercial videos (not produced by BAM) related to significant BAM artists. The most common media in the collection are digital files, VHS cassettes, and DVD discs. Other formats include U-matic tapes, DV, Beta SP, and 35mm film. A range of audio recordings are represented in the collection in the form of CDs, cassettes, LPs, and DAT tapes. The bulk of the BAM Audio and Video Collection is made up of the Main Stage documentation. Since the beginning of the Next Wave Festival in 1983, nearly all Main Stage performances have been videotaped and viewing copies are stored in the Archives. Since 1999, BAM's Education & Humanities Department has been documenting select programming from their office, including the Artist Talk series; the Eat, Drink and Be Literary series; and various post-performance events. These documents are regularly transferred to the Archives and absorbed into the Education & Humanities Collection. The Non-Performance Video Collection spans the late 1970s to the present and covers a staggering range of material. Everything from videos used as elements in performance to BAM Board presentations to television programming about BAM are included. The small but growing Video Library is a collection of commercial recordings related to important BAM artists. Some of these acquisitions include commercial DVDs of the Trisha Brown Dance Company; The Living Theatre; and documentaries on Pina Bausch, Bill T. Jones, and the 1984 Dance Black America Festival. Please contact the BAM HAMM Archives for access to these materials.

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- 04 - BAM Non-Performance Video
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- 06 - Audition, Demonstration and Rehearsal Video

BAM Audio

- 01 - BAM Education & Humanities Audio
- 02 - BAM Non-Performance Audio
- 03 - BAM Board Audio
- 04 - Commercial Audio
- 05 - BAM Reel to Reel Audio