

Chelsea Theater Center

Collection Identifier

98_Chelsea_Theater_Center

Dates

1965 – 1981 inclusive

1966 – 1980 bulk

Abstract

The Chelsea Theater Center Collection is comprised of photographs, press clippings, promotional materials, programs, and other documents related to the Chelsea Theater Center's ten-year residency at BAM.

Extent

4 document boxes

Agency History

The Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), founded in 1861, is a thriving arts center in Brooklyn. Originally conceived as a home for classical music, it quickly broadened to include theater and lectures, and welcomed the star performers of the day. After the original location in Brooklyn Heights was destroyed by fire in 1903, a new theater was built at 30 Lafayette Avenue in Fort Greene, and the BAM campus has now grown to comprise three buildings. Today, BAM is known as an adventurous multi-arts center with world-renowned programming. It is celebrated for its Next Wave Festival in the fall, which presents contemporary experimental performance, and for its spring season of international theater, dance, and opera. BAM also offers a robust roster of film, a comprehensive Education & Humanities program, and serves an important civic function, hosting numerous community events.

Historical/Biographical Note

The Chelsea Theater Center was a not-for-profit theater company, founded in 1965 by artistic director Robert Kalfin and dedicated to the production of innovative and lesser-known works. The Chelsea Theater Center experimented with the use of multimedia, revived forgotten historic plays, and presented new, groundbreaking productions from lesser-known playwrights. After presenting its first three seasons in Manhattan, in 1968 the Chelsea Theater Center became a company in residence at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. During its decade-long residency, Chelsea utilized BAM theater and office space and publicity resources while retaining full artistic control over its productions. Chelsea's BAM residency saw the production of shows such as *Candide*, *Slave Ship*, *The Beggar's Opera*, *Saved*, *Tarot*, *The Screens*, *Yentl the Yeshiva Boy*, and *Kaspar*. Both *Candide*

and Yentl moved to Broadway. Chelsea moved back to Manhattan in 1978, although four former Chelsea members - Michael David, Des McAnuff, Sherman Warner, and Edward Strong - remained in Brooklyn and continued to present experimental works at BAM as associate directors of the Dodger Theater. The Dodger Theater received BAM funding and theater space from spring 1978 until March 1980. Due to a lack of funding, the Chelsea Theater Center ended its operations in 1984.

Scope & Content

The Chelsea Theater Center files consist of news clippings (reviews of productions and feature articles), production photographs (including slides and contact sheets), promotional materials (including advertisements and special event materials), and programs from nearly 15 years of Chelsea Theater productions. The files also contain materials such as budget spreadsheets, scripts, actors' kits, and set design plans for certain shows.

Arrangement

Materials are grouped by production and type and arranged in chronological order. Set design plans are flattened and stored separately.

Processing Note

Photographs, contact sheets, and press clippings were removed from binders and, where possible without causing damage, separated from plastic sleeves and glued-on backings. Newspaper clippings were photocopied.

Restrictions

Open to researchers. Appointments are necessary for the use of archival collections.

Use Restrictions

Collection use is subject to all copyright laws. Permission to publish materials must be obtained in writing from the Director of the BAM Hamm Archives. For more information, contact BAM Hamm Archives 1000 Dean Street Brooklyn, NY 11238 Phone: 718.724.8151 Email: slehner@bam.org

Provenance

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Preferred Citation

Published citations should take the following form: Identification of item, date (if known); BAM Chelsea Theater Collection, box number, BAM Hamm Archives, Brooklyn Academy of Music.

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[Maureen Brennan as Cunegonde in the Chelsea Theater Center production of "Candide" during BAM Fall Series, 1973], 1973

[Maureen Brennan as Cunegonde in the Chelsea Theater Center production of "Candide" during BAM Fall Series, 1973], 1973

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[Sylvia Soares in a scene from the Chelsea Theater production "A Black Quartet: Four Plays"

during BAM Spring Series, 1969], April 1969

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