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BAM: The Complete Works

Edited by Steven Serafin

CELEBRATING 150 YEARS

“It is in artistic expression that we see what it is to be human, and what is possible for human beings to be. That this has been the purpose of BAM for the past 150 years...is what we might call a magnificent and inspiring spectacle.”

—Charles Mee, playwright

“Through decades of resilience, reinvention, and an unstoppable commitment to bringing together the finest artists and audiences, BAM has profoundly shaped its neighborhood, our city, and the world’s cultural life.”

—Kate D. Levin, Commissioner, New York Department of Cultural Affairs

“Ladies and Gentlemen, the Brooklyn Academy of Music is no longer a myth, but a present and grand reality. (Applause) It denotes an era in our history, and henceforth it should be a power in our midst.”

—From the opening night speech by Simeon B. Chittenden,
Brooklyn Academy of Music, January 15, 1861

BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music) is at once the oldest performing arts center in the US and a legendary nexus for contemporary global and local culture. From its opening night in 1861, BAM has forged an unmatched artistic legacy, emerging in the second half of the 20th century as the preeminent stage for the most visionary artists and performers of the age. Its standard of excellence has defined and supported the institution through times of triumph as well as turmoil.

BAM: The Complete Works (Quantuck Lane Press; October 24, 2011; \$95) is a narrative chronology of the past 150 years with more than 350 archival images of artists and performances. A sumptuously illustrated and visually striking overview of BAM’s legacy, the book includes essays by and about some of the many artists integral to the fabric of BAM’s identity, including Laurie Anderson, Pina Bausch, Sarah Bernhardt, Peter Brook, William Christie, Merce Cunningham, Isadora Duncan, Philip Glass, Bill T. Jones, Mark Morris, Sam Mendes, Steve Reich, and Robert Wilson, among others. Other highlights include acclaimed

playwright Charles Mee’s moving, personal introduction, writer Phillip Lopate’s absorbing illumination of the period covering BAM’s earliest beginnings through the 1960s, and cultural critic John Rockwell’s intimate and incisive account of impresario Harvey Lichtenstein’s groundbreaking tenure at BAM.

BAM: The Complete Works also captures the story of BAM’s vital role, not only in the evolution of the performing arts, but also in the intellectual and social development of New York City and the country. From its early years playing host to a remarkable array of famous speakers, thinkers, and politicians including Frederick Douglass, Mark Twain, and P.T. Barnum to the artistic renaissance engineered by Lichtenstein in the 1960s (which led *The New York Times* to identify the institution as “the foremost showcase for contemporary experimental performing arts in the United States”) and the dynamic present-day period of local and global expansion under President Karen Brooks Hopkins and Executive Producer Joseph V. Melillo, BAM has both reflected and affected the changing currents of its city and greater nation for the past century and a half.

BAM: The Complete Works launches the sesquicentennial celebration of an organization that has stood the test of time for 150 years, enduring fire, flood, the Great Depression, and a host of other monumental changes. BAM’s 150th anniversary includes a yearlong program of special presentations and events designed to highlight a history of groundbreaking performances and creative landmarks while laying the foundations for a dynamic future. Perhaps the following anonymous sound bite overheard by Charles Mee—which he includes in the book’s introduction—best sums up just how beloved this Brooklyn cultural landmark is: “All I need is food, clothing, shelter, a happy family, and tickets to BAM, and then I have a complete life.”

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About the editor:

Steven Serafin, a leading authority on the arts, is the editor of *Continuum Encyclopedias of American and British Literature* and *Encyclopedia of World Literature in the Twentieth Century*. He lives in New York City.

Credits

Honorary Editor James H. Ottaway Jr.

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