1823 Augustus Graham and a group of prominent citizens establish an Apprentices' Library in the village of Brooklyn.

1843 The Apprentices' Library renews its charter, changing its name to the Brooklyn Institute and vowing to continue its policy of providing education for adults.

1858 The Philharmonic Society of Brooklyn proposes building a cultural center for all of Brooklyn; the leaders of Brooklyn society and business assemble at the Polytechnic Institute and plan for an “academy” of music.

1859 The Brooklyn Academy of Music is incorporated “for the purpose of encouraging and cultivating a taste for music, literature and the arts.”

1861 Designed by Leopold Eidlitz, the first Academy of Music on Montague Street in Brooklyn Heights is inaugurated on January 15 with an elaborate program including Mozart, Donizetti, Verdi, and Friedrich von Flotow; Mercadante’s Il Giuramento, the Academy’s first opera performance, appears one week later with the First Lady, Mary Todd Lincoln, in attendance.

1862 Immeasurable public gathering endorses President Abraham Lincoln’s emancipation policy.

1863 John Wilkes Booth performs in Shakespeare’s Richard III and Charles Selby’s The Marble Heart.

1864 During the Civil War, the Brooklyn and Long Island Sanitary Fair is held to raise money for the U.S. Sanitary Commission, which aided sick and wounded Union soldiers.

1864 Prominent Brooklyn preacher Henry Ward Beecher speaks out against slavery.

1880 D’Oyly Carte Opera Company presents Gilbert & Sullivan’s The Pirates of Penzance.

1883 Celebration for the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge on May 24 with President Chester A. Arthur and Grover Cleveland, then governor of New York, culminates with a reception at the Academy of Music.

1884 Mark Twain and George W. Cable entertain with readings and storytelling.

1885 Memorial services held for former president Ulysses S. Grant.

1887 The recently established Boston Symphony Orchestra, under the auspices of the Philharmonic Society of Brooklyn, begins an annual residency that will continue for 75 years.

1890 The Brooklyn Institute is reincorporated as the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences.

1891 Edwin Booth gives his last public appearance on April 4 in the title role of Shakespeare’s Hamlet.

1896 Eleonora Duse and her company appear in Camille.

1900 Martin W. Littleton, Brooklyn borough president, names a Citizens’ Committee of 100 with the purpose to build a new Academy of Music.

1900 From 1904 to 1908, Academy of Music concerts, recitals, and lectures take place in substitute Brooklyn locations.

1905 The site for the new Academy is selected on Lafayette Avenue in Fort Greene; Henry B. Hertz and Hugh Taltarni are named as architects.

1908 The Academy of Music opens in its new home with a song recital by Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink and an inaugural gala featuring the Metropolitan Opera with Geraldine Farrar and Enrico Caruso in Gounod’s Faust. Isadora Duncan dances three movements from Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7 with Walter Damrosch conducting the New York Symphony Orchestra.

1909 Gustav Mahler conducts the Philharmonic Society of New York.

1910 Arturo Toscanni conducts the Metropolitan Opera Company in Aida with Emmy Destinn. Anna Pavlova makes her Academy debut with dance partner Mikhail Mordkin. Jacob Riis lectures on “America’s Most Useful Citizen.” Ruth St. Denis dances with her all-female company.

1913 Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan discuss their work together in “The Heart and the Hand.”
1915 Former president William Howard Taft speaks on “Our World Relationships.”
1917 Sarah Bernhardt gives six performances in three days at the age of 73, all despite an amputated leg.
1919 Sergei Rachmaninoff gives his first recital at the Academy.
1920 Casanova falls ill when he begins to sing in L’Elisir d’Amore on December 20.
William Butler Yeats delivers an address on “A Theatre of the People.”
1931 Paul Robeson gives a song recital.
1933 Martha Graham performs with her company.
1935 Ted Shawn and His Men Dancers explore shamanistic dance.
1936 The Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences merges with the Brooklyn Academy of Music.
1938 Marian Anderson sings at the Academy.
1939 Thomas Mann, having fled Germany, speaks on “Democracy.”
1940 President Franklin D. Roosevelt appears to packed crowds, with 2,200 seated in the Opera House, 700 jamming the stage, and another 6,000 outside in the street.
1941 The Brooklyn Symphony Orchestra has its inaugural concert, but despite illustrious conductors, such as Sir Thomas Beecham, it does not survive the war.
1948 Pearl Primus and Company dances her experiences of Africa.
1952 Robert E. Blum, president of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, announces the plan to save the Academy of Music by the conveyance of the building to the city of New York at a nominal rent of $1 per year for a term of 100 years.
Physical deterioration and fundraising challenges necessitate the removal of the cornice at 30 Lafayette Avenue.
Theater for Dance combines the talents of Merce Cunningham, Jean Erdman, Erick Hawkins, and Donald McKayle.
1954 Agnes de Mille Dance Theatre performs.
1955 The Brooklyn Philharmonia debuts with Siegfried Landau conducting.
1956 Pearl Lang and Company performs.
1957 Jazz concert series features musicians such as Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Louis Armstrong, and Count Basie.
1958 The Brooklyn Opera Company brings repertory opera and local singers to the Opera House.
1960 The Academy begins performing arts programming for young people.
1962 Rudolf Nureyev makes his American debut with the Chicago Opera Ballet shortly after defecting from the Soviet Union.
1964 Paul Taylor Dance Company performs.
1967 Harvey Lichtenstein is appointed president of the Academy; “Overtune,” says the New Yorker, “the somnolent Academy became the country’s leading dance center.”
Sarah Caldwell’s American National Opera Company opens with Lulu, Falstaff, and Tosca.
1968 Merce Cunningham Dance Company performs its first extended New York season.
The Living Theatre, under the direction of Julian Beck and Judith Malina, returns from exile in Europe to perform Mysteries and Smaller Pieces, Antigone, Paradise Now, and Frankenstein in repertory.
The Chelsea Theater Center of Robert Kalfin and Michael David opens its first Brooklyn season.
American Ballet Theatre performs with guest artists Carla Fracci and Erik Bruhn.
Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performs.
1969 Twyla Tharp performs Group Activities, which places the audience onstage with the dancers.
The Polish Laboratory Theatre, directed by Jerzy Grotowski, performs The Constant Prince, Acropolis, and Apocalypsis Cum Figovit, produced under the auspices of the Academy, off-site performances are held at the Washington Square Methodist Church in Manhattan.
Robert Wilson makes his Academy debut with The Life and Times of Sigmund Freud.
1971 The St. Felix Street Corporation is created and the Academy of Music declares its independence from the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences.
The Royal Shakespeare Company makes its Academy debut with A Midsummer Night’s Dream, directed by Peter Brook.
The first Afro-Asian Festival includes performances from Cambodia, Senegal, Morocco, Iran, India, and Sierra Leone.
Steve Reich and Musicians perform.
Lukas Foss follows Siegfried Landau as conductor of the Brooklyn Philharmonia.
1973 The acronym BAM is introduced in place of the Brooklyn Academy of Music.
BAM’s newly renovated ballroom is formally dedicated as the Lepercq Space, named after Paul Lepercq, chairman of the board.
The Chelsea Theater Center revises Leonard Bernstein’s Candide in a production directed by Hal Prince that following its BAM run moves to Broadway.
1974 BAM presents a four-month British Theater Season with productions from the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Actors Company, and the Young Vic.
The Tashi Quartet inaugurates the Chamber Music Series, produced by Scott Nickrenz.
1977 A month before the fall season opens, a 30-inch city water main under Ashland Place bursts, causing severe flooding. Legendary actress Helen Hayes heads an emergency campaign to raise funds for the “big mop-up.”

BAM presents the inaugural DanceAfrica, the country’s largest celebration of African American dance, created by Chuck Davis.

1978 The BAM Theater Company performs Samuel Beckett’s Waiting for Godot with Michael Egan, Milt O’Shea, Austin Pendleton, and Sam Waterston, its final production under the direction of Frank Dunlop. Four members of the Chelsea Theater Center remain at BAM and form the Dodger Theater, launching their season with A Flea in Her Ear. Karen Brooks Hopkins joins the BAM staff as development officer in the planning department.

1979 The Comédie-Française performs Molière’s The Misanthrope and Feydeau’s The Misanthrope, inaugurating BAM Opera; Princess Diana—Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales—attends the opening night performance and gala reception.

The Gospel at Colonus, Lee Breuer and Bob Telson’s synthesis of Sophocles and soul, opens at BAM and later wins an OBIE Award.

1980 The BAM Theater Company is reestablished with an ambitious repertory season under the direction of Royal Shakespeare Company veteran David Jones.

1981 The Next Wave series debuts with the Trisha Brown, Laura Dean, and Lucinda Childs dance companies and Philip Glass’s opera Satyagraha.

1982 The Brooklyn Philharmonic is renamed the Brooklyn Philharmonic.

1983 BAMart begins with the inaugural season of the Next Wave Festival; visual artist Roy Lichtenstein is commissioned to create an image for the festival poster and journal.

The Next Wave celebrates and produces the 10th anniversary of New Music America, featuring concerts by more than 100 composers at 23 venues throughout New York City.

1984 Pina Bausch’s Tanztheater Wuppertal makes its BAM debut with a program comprised of The Rite of Spring, 1980, Cafe Müller, and Blues forale.

Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane & Company performs Secret Passages, an interdisciplinary work created with composer Peter Gordon, visual artist Keith Haring, and fashion designer Will Smith.

BAM revises Philip Glass and Robert Wilson’s Einstein on the Beach during the second season of the Next Wave Festival.

1985 Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch returns in a Next Wave engagement with a program that includes Arien, Kontaktaktof, and The Seven Deadly Sins.

1986 Central Ballet of China performs in its first American tour. Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker makes her BAM debut with Rosas Dans Rosas.

Kronos Quartet makes its first BAM appearance as part of the Next Wave.

Robert Wilson’s The Civil Wars: a tree is best measured when it is down: Act V—the Rome Section, with music by Philip Glass, has its American premiere.

1987 BAM produces its first Martin Luther King Jr. tribute in collaboration with the office of the Brooklyn borough president.

Twyla Tharp Dance presents a monthlong program of performances.

The Mahabharata, with music by Philip Glass, has its American premiere.

John Adams, Alice Goodman, Peter Sellars, and Mark Morris collaborate on Nixon in China, which makes its New York debut in a BAM co-commission with the Houston Grand Opera and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Harvey Lichtenstein accepts a special Tony Award presented to BAM.

Ingmar Bergman, with the Royal Dramatic Theatre of Sweden, makes his American stage debut with a production of Shakespeare’s Hamlet; performances are in Swedish with no translation.

Eiko & Koma perform Thirst, Tree.

1989 The Welsh National Opera makes its American debut with Peter Stein’s production of Falstaff, inaugurating BAM Opera; Princess Diana—Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales—attends the opening night performance and gala reception.

651 (later 651 ARTS), taking its name from the Fulton Street address of the BAM Majestic Theater, is launched to present events reflecting the cultural diversity of Brooklyn while creating a broader market for its artists.

The Next Wave celebrates and produces the 10th anniversary of New Music America, featuring concerts by more than 100 composers at 23 venues throughout New York City.

1990 BAM’s Performing Arts Program for Young People begins its 30th season of dance, music, and theater for New York City’s school children.

The Festival of Indonesia features dance, music, and theater for New York City’s school children.

The Seven Deadly Sins, Kontakthof, and The Seven Deadly Sins.

The Festival of Indonesia features dance, shadow puppetry, and gamelans.

Mark Morris Dance Group performs L’Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato.
1990 Robert Lepage makes his BAM debut with Polygraph, a theatrical adaptation of a true crime and its aftermath told through a series of interconnected stories created with Marie Brassard.


BAM Opera presents the American premiere of The Death of Klinghoffer, a second collaboration by John Adams, and directed by Deborah Warner; the other by the Royal National Theatre, directed by Peter Brook.


BAM presents the New York debut of Ariane Mnouchkine with Les Atrides at the Park Slope Armory in Brooklyn.

1993 Philip Glass’s presentation of Orpheé begins a trilogy of music-theater pieces exploring Jean Cocteau’s work.

American premiere of The Black Rider from Robert Wilson, Tom Waits, and William S. Burroughs.

1994 Next Wave opens with Radical Graham, a retrospective look at the work of Martha Graham on the 100th anniversary of her birth.

The Nederlands Dans Theater presents a program with three separate companies.

The Maly Drama Theatre of St. Petersburg makes its BAM debut with Gaudefurmus.

1995 The Kiryov Opera performs The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh, featuring the BAM debut of Valery Gergiev.

The Royal Dramatic Theatre of Sweden returns as part of a citywide international debate about so-called victim art.

1996 Robert Spano joins the Brooklyn Philharmonic as music director.

BAM pitches its tent in Battery Park City and presents the French equestrian theater troupe Zingaro—with its 26-horse ensemble—in Chimère.

Trisha Brown dances in Post Modern and Beyond, a retrospective of her career.

Sankai Juku makes its BAM debut with Yuragi: In a Space of Perpetual Motion.

Robert Lepage returns to BAM with The Seven Streams of the River Ota.

BAM presents The Harlem Nutcracker, with music by Tchaikovsky as arranged by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn, with David Berger, and choreography by Donald Byrd.

1997 BAMcafé opens in the Lepercq Space.

DanceAfrica celebrates its 20th anniversary and launches the DanceAfrica Education Program in partnership with the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation.

Jonathan Miller directs Bach’s St. Matthew Passion.

1998 BAM completes the conversion of the Carey Playhouse to the BAM Rose Cinemas, opening the country’s first multiplex cinema in a performing arts center.

The Moscow Art Theater performs Chekhov’s The Three Sisters.

The Royal Shakespeare Company in its first American residency presents five productions in repertory.

William Forsythe and Ballett Frankfurt present the American premiere of EIDOS:TELOS.

1999 The Almeida Theatre Company performs Racine’s Phèdre and Britannicus in repertory, featuring Diana Rigg.

Harvey Lichtenstein retires and is succeeded by Karen Brooks Hopkins as president and Joseph V. Melillo as executive producer.

The BAM Majestic Theater is renamed the BAM Harvey Theater in honor of Harvey Lichtenstein and in conjunction with an endowment gift from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

Laurie Anderson opens the Next Wave with her performance of Songs and Stories from Moby Dick.

BAMcFam Live is launched in the Lepercq Space, programming live music and spoken word.

2000 Ralph Fienes is featured in the Almeida Theatre Company productions of Shakespeare’s Richard II and Coriolanus.

Ratan Thiyam’s Chorus Repertory Theatre of Manipur performs Uttar-Priyadarshini.

2001 BAM presents two productions of Hamlet in the same season: one adapted and directed by Peter Brook, the other by the Royal National Theatre, directed by John Caird.

White Oak Dance Project performs in PostForward, a program by pioneering Judson Church choreographers featuring Mikhail Baryshnikov.

Company B Belvoir performs Cloudstreet as part of Next Wave Down Under, a mini-festival of Australian performance including over 100 artists; all performances go forward despite the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center.

Rosas performs Drumming, with music by Steve Reich and choreography by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker.

2002 Restoration of BAM’s facade at 30 Lafayette Avenue begins; CandyBAM, visual artist Vie Munir’s gingerbread house, wraps the building.

Israel’s Batsheva Dance Company performs Ohad Naharin’s Naharin’s Virus.

BAM Opera presents all three Monteverdi operas with each production by a different ensemble: Les Arts Florissants and the Aix-en-Provence European Academy of Music; the Dutch National Opera and Les Talens Lyriques; and the Chicago Opera Theater.

Flora Shaw plays the title role of Euripides’ Medea, directed by Deborah Warner, following its BAM run, the Abbey Theatre production moves to Broadway.

Merce Cunningham Dance Company performs the world premiere of Split Sides to live music performed by Radiohead and Sigur Rós.

Propeller's first appearance at BAM with an all-male production of A Midsummer Night’s Dream, directed by Edward Hall.
Tony Kushner’s Homebody/Kabul, featuring Maggie Gyllenhaal and Linda Emond, fills the Harvey Theater for three weeks.
Ralph Lemon performs Come home Chantry Patton, the final part of his Geography Trilogy.

2004

BAM completes renovations on the facade of its 30 Lafayette Avenue building and names the facility in honor of philanthropist Peter Jay Sharp, recognizing a $20 million gift from the Peter Jay Sharp Foundation.

Eat, Drink & Be Literary begins its first season in partnership with the National Book Foundation in BAMcafé.
Vanessa Redgrave plays the title role in the Royal Shakespeare Company production of Euripides’ Hércula.

BAM president Karen Brooks Hopkins celebrates 25 years of service to the institution.
Isabelle Huppert performs in Sarah Kane’s 4.48 Psychosis.

James Thierrée, with La Compagnie du Hanneton, makes his BAM debut with Bright Abyss.

BAM presents two radically different productions of Heddha Gabler, one by the Sydney Theatre Company with Cate Blanchett, directed by Robyn Nevin, and one by the Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz Berlin, directed by Thomas Ostermeier.

Robert Redford inaugurs Sundance Institute at BAM, a new partnership featuring cutting-edge independent films, readings, concerts, and talks.

BAM celebrates Steve Reich @ 70, which includes choreography by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and Akram Khan.
BAM presents the 51st (dream) state, a soul-searching investigation of post-9/11 America, created by poet Sekou Sundiata.

2005

Metropolitan Opera: Live in HD begins screening high-definition live satellite feeds of Met Opera performances in BAM Rose Cinemas with Gounod’s Roméo et Juliette.

Visual artist William Kentridge directs his interpretation of Mozart’s The Magic Flute.

DanceAfrica celebrates its 30th anniversary.
The Royal Shakespeare Company returns with Ian McKellen in Shakespeare’s Macbeth and Chekhov’s The Seagull, and Chekhov’s The Magic Flute.

BAM presents the National Theatre of Great Britain's production of Samuel Beckett's Happy Days with Fiona Shaw.

BAMKids Film Festival celebrates its 10th anniversary.
BAMiDeps Film Festival celebrates its 10th anniversary.

Patrick Stewart plays the title role of Shakespeare’s Macbeth in a Chichester Festival Theatre production directed by Rupert Goold, following its BAM run, the production moves to Broadway.

2006

BAM presents a new production of Richard III, directed by Robert McKean.

BAM presents the National Theatre of Great Britain’s production of Tennessee Williams’s The Streetcar Named Desire, directed by Liv Ullmann.

BAM celebrates executive producer Joseph V. Melillo’s 25 years of service to artists and audiences.

BAM breaks ground on the BAM Richard B. Fisher Building, named in his honor by his widow, Jeanne Donovan Fisher, with substantial support from New York City; the arts and community center is the first addition to the BAM campus since the Majestic Theater (now the BAM Harvey Theater).

The inaugural BAM Opera Festival explores the work and milieu of composer Henry Purcell in a program of operas, concerts, and other events selected by guest curator William Christie.

Alexei Ratmansky creates a new version of The Nutcracker for American Ballet Theatre’s five-year seasonal residency at BAM.

DanceMotion USA, a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State produced by BAM, showcases contemporary American dance abroad, the first tours feature Evidence, ODC/Dance, and Urban Bush Women.

BAM begins development of the Hamm Archives Center in a new facility adjacent to the Harvey Theater, providing a permanent home for its archival collection.

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Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater returns to BAM with programs of new and classic works celebrating its 50th anniversary.

BAM launches the Bridge Project, a transatlantic partnership with the Old Vic Theatre and London’s Neal Street Productions; the Bridge Project opens at BAM with productions of Chekhov’s The Cherry Orchard and Shakespeare’s The Winter’s Tale, directed by Sam Mendes, before touring venues around the globe.

BAM celebrates Merce Cunningham’s 90th birthday with Nearly Ninety, performed by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company.

BAM presents Muslim Voices: Arts & Ideas in partnership with the Asia Society, New York University’s Center for Dialogue, and other supporting and media partners, highlighting the rich diversity of the Islamic world through performances and events throughout New York City, featuring artists like Yousouf N’Dour and Sulayman Al-Bassam.

Cate Blanchett defines the role of Blanche DuBois in the Sydney Theatre Company’s production of Tennessee Williams’s A Streetcar Named Desire, directed by Liv Ullmann.

BAM celebrates executive producer Joseph V. Melillo’s 25 years of service to artists and audiences.

2010

BAM presents the Royal National Theatre / Market Theatre of Johannesburg production of Tennessee Williams’s The Glass Menagerie, directed by Athol Fugard, before touring venues around the globe.

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The Spring Season includes six U.S. premieres with performances by Lindsay Duncan, Derek Jacobi, Alan Rickman, Geoffrey Rush, and Fiona Shaw.

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