INTRODUCTORY READING


Adaptation

The Brooklyn Academy of Music first opened on January 15th 1861 in Brooklyn Heights on the corner of Montague and Clinton streets. A performing arts center, BAM was established by wealthy Brooklyn families, such as the Lows and the Pierreponts, who wanted a concert hall in their borough to rival New York City. On November 30th 1903, a massive fire destroyed the original building and a new one was built by the firm of Herts and Tallant in 1908 at the corner of Lafayette Avenue and Ashland Place in the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn.

The BAM buildings were designed in a neo-Italianate style with cream-colored bricks, and include three major performance spaces: the Howard Gilman Opera House (seating 2,109 people), the Harvey Lichtenstein Theater (seating 874), and BAMcafé, formerly called Lepercq Space, an old ballroom remodeled in 1997 to become a restaurant and live music venue.

In 1864, BAM hosted the Brooklyn and Long Island Sanitary Fair at its Montague Street location. The Sanitary Fair was a fundraising initiative established by the Union government during the Civil War. It was run primarily by women, who sold donated goods and services to raise money for supplies for the troops. The first fair took place in Chicago in 1863 and raised almost $100,000. One year later, the Brooklyn Sanitary Fair raised $400,000, which broke the record of any other fair before it.

Throughout its existence, many popular figures have visited BAM’s stages. Edwin Booth, a famous 19th century actor, first performed at the academy in 1862, and on April 4th 1891 he gave the last performance of his career at the Montague Street building, drawing thousands to see him in his signature role as Shakespeare’s Hamlet. Over the course of it’s over 150 year history, BAM has hosted speeches by Frederick Douglass and Amelia Earhart, dances choreographed by Martha Graham, and performances from French actress Sarah Bernhardt, considered in her era to be one of the best actresses in the world. By the turn of the century, BAM had hosted international operas, orchestras, and theater actors to entertain the masses and establish Brooklyn as a formidable rival to New York City’s cultural dominance.

From 1935 to 1970, BAM was one of several organizations in the borough affiliated with the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, which later became the Brooklyn Museum. Harvey Lichtenstein, president and executive producer of BAM from 1967-1999, expanded the academy’s offerings to include ethnic music, dance and theater. The Next Wave Festival, a series of experimental performance art, was launched in 1981 under his authority. In the same year, BAM formed a local development branch that purchased and refurbished several performing sites nearby. In 1998 a four-screen movie theater, BAM Rose Cinemas, was added to the performance space. The academy encourages new and unusual performances and draws audiences from throughout the
metropolitan area. The Brooklyn Philharmonic is the resident orchestra at BAM, founded in 1954 by conductor Siegfried Landau.

1. What is DOCUMENT 1?

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2. What does DOCUMENT 1 say is the purpose of the Brooklyn Academy of Music?

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3. Look at the names of the people associated with the Brooklyn Academy of Music. What type of professionals do you think they might be? Why do you think that?

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4. What about this document tells you that it is from an archive?

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The Brooklyn Academy of Music was opening with appropriate *éclat* last night. Up to this time – while we claim to be the third city of the Union – we have not had a single public building worthy of a decent country town.

We regard the inauguration of the Academy of Music as an era in the history of Brooklyn, not alone because it makes accessible a refined enjoyment; not alone because it will tend to encourage and foster local trade and business, and keep thousands of dollars here that would otherwise be spent in New York; not because it will make Brooklyn more desirable as a place of residence even; but because we regard it as an indication that our citizens will not be content with having Brooklyn any longer an overgrown village, an incomplete *chrysalis* – a city without the accessories that make city life bearable and enjoyable. Though we are fully sensible of the magnitude of this undertaking, and the energy that it required to bring it to completion, we attach importance to it chiefly because it is the forerunner of other metropolitan attractions, and as the first practical realization of a spirit which we have labored to foster, and which we trust will go on gathering strength until our beautiful city shall be as much indebted to art as she is to nature; that will secure her institutions which will make her name honorably known abroad, and that as
1. What does the author of DOCUMENT 2 mean when they say, “while we claim to be the third city of the Union”?

2. In your own words, how does the article say that the Brooklyn Academy of Music will improve Brooklyn?

3. Why do you think Brooklynites felt it so necessary to have an arts center?

4. The Brooklyn Academy of Music was one of the first arts organizations in Brooklyn. What are some other Brooklyn organizations that support art and culture that Brooklyn has today?

- The Great Sanitary Fair.
  The Opening Night.
  Details of Receipts.
- The Features of Knickerbocker Hall.

23 Feb 1864.

- The Great Sanitary Fair.
  The Third Day’s Doings.
  $120,000 in Hand.
- The Crowd Greater Than Ever.
  Old Folks Concert.
  Hotel de Louber and its Management.
  The Mills Museum.
  Today’s Record.

25 Feb 1864.

- The Great Sanitary Fair.
  The Second Week.
  The Receipt Two Hundred and Twelve Thousand Dollars.
- Fair Closes on Thursday.
- Auction on Friday.
- Stewart’s Shawl Missing.
  Departments in Detail.

29 Feb 1864.
1. Describe DOCUMENT 3a in detail. What can you learn about the event based on how the space is decorated?

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2. The Brooklyn and Long Island Sanitary Fair was held in 1864 by the United State Sanitary Commission. The fair was a fundraiser to support the Union troops during the Civil War; the money went to buy clothes, food, and other supplies. Analyze DOCUMENT 3a and describe what types of goods were sold at the Sanitary Fair to raise money.

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3. By looking at the headlines, DOCUMENTS 3b, 3c, and 3d, what type of things were at/happened at the fair?

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4. Imagine you’re an attendee of the fair. Write a short note to a friend/relative describing what you did and/or what you saw.

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Document 4 – The Kemble Souvenir Programme.
Brooklyn: Brooklyn Academy of Music, 1883.
1. Using evidence from DOCUMENT 4, what do you think Single Life is about?

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2. Who wrote Single Life?

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3. Why might someone want a souvenir program?

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4. The female characters in Single Life are called “spinsters” and the male characters are called bachelors. The word “spinster” has a negative connotation today. Why do you think single women were thought of more negatively than single men?

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5. Do you think older single women are still judged more harshly than older single men? Explain your answer.

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1. Describe the cover of the program. How do you think it was created?

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2. Sarah Bernhardt and M. Coquelin (Benoît-Constant Coquelin) were two incredibly famous French actors in 1901. What is the implication of two famous international stars performing at the Brooklyn Academy of Music?

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3. What plays were they performing?

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4. From looking at DOCUMENT 4, what can you infer about the artistic style of the turn of the century?

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FIRE DESTROYS THE ACADEMY.

A Few Standing Walls and a Mass of Ruins Where Historic Structure Stood.

Hugh McLaughlin, a Veteran Fire Fighter, Takes Part in the Work of Saving Buildings.

A fire that completely destroyed Brooklyn’s most historic theater, the Academy of Music, in Montague street, broke out a few minutes before 9 o’clock this morning. The flames spread rapidly and in an hour and a half the fire had attained its height and had practically burned itself out.

For the first hour of its progress the down town portion of Brooklyn was in commotion. Business came to a standstill and a host of badly frightened folk watched the big pillar of flame and black smoke that rose about the house topics in the vicinity of Borough Hall.

Not since the Brooklyn Theater was destroyed in a holocaust nearly thirty years ago has Brooklyn seen a blaze so spectacular and dramatic as that of this morning. The loss will not be less than $150,000 and possibly reach $200,000.

Blaze Probably Caused by Electric Light Wire

The big structure, which was so adaptable to different purposes, was to have been the scene of the complementary dinner to-night to Senator Patrick H. McCarren. To this is attributed the origin of the blaze. It is though that the electric wires temporarily brought into the building for decoration purposes may have come in contact with the flimsy bunting. The long lines of festooning were admirable aids to the spread of the flames. They acted as fuses to the timber, dried by age, and their combination was supported by quantities of scenery and rubbish in the cellar.

1. How did the fire start and why did it spread so quickly?

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2. The article mentions that the Brooklyn Academy of Music was an “adaptable space.” Why would it be important for a performing arts space to be adaptable?

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3. How long did the fire take to burn out?

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4. The article mentions the Brooklyn Theater which burned in 1876. It describes the fire as “a holocaust.” What is one question you have about the Brooklyn Theater fire?

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Document 7 – Brooklyn Academy of Music Postcard. 193-?.
1. When was the new Brooklyn Academy of Music building on Lafayette Street created? (Look closely at the image.)

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2. Describe the structure.

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3. When was DOCUMENT 7 created? This is your claim. What evidence in the document supports this claim?

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Assistant Director Is Appointed By Brooklyn Academy of Music

Former Anti-Poverty Worker Hopes to Attract New Audience to Center

By EDWIN BOLWELL

The 108-year-old Brooklyn Academy of Music has appointed Lloyd Hezekiah, a native of Trinidad and a former anti-poverty worker in the borough's Bedford-Stuyvesant area, as its assistant director, a new post.

"My appointment here is definite recognition by the academy of the realities of the mid-20th century," Mr. Hezekiah said yesterday in the academy's offices at 30 Lafayette Avenue.

"It is a positive and visible sign of the new direction the academy is taking for total involvement in the life of all Brooklyn."

Among the realities being recognized by the academy, he said, is the multi racial composition of Brooklyn today, particularly in the communities surrounding the academy.

Residents Felt Slighted

Some of the non-white residents predominant in these communities — Bedford-Stuyvesant, Fort Greene, Red Hook and Park Slope — have felt they were not part of the academy's activities, Mr. Hezekiah said.

It is the academy's aim to reach out to these people, as well as to the rest of Brooklyn's residents and those of other boroughs, and tap new audiences, Mr. Hezekiah said.

To help in this direction, the academy plans to broaden the scope of its lecture series, which it presents annually as well as concert performances. Performers being presented this fall include David Oistrakh, Vladimir Ashkenazy and the Boston Symphony Orchestra in its 80th annual visit to the academy.

Scheduled for this fall is a series of community forums that will consider such inner-city problems as poverty and education. Another new lecture series for fall is tentatively titled "Writers Alive!" and is designed to bring together famous American authors for free-wheeling discussions.

"We are making a definite attempt to make the academy a performing arts center, like Lincoln Center," Mr. Hezekiah declared, adding that long-range plans envisage groups of resident performers attached to the academy.

Before assuming his new post as assistant to Harvey Lichtenstein last month, Mr. Hezekiah was assistant director of the performing arts division of Bedford-Stuyvesant Youth in Action, Inc., an anti-poverty agency.

Mr. Hezekiah, 38 years old, is a graduate of the New Era Academy of Drama and Music in London and of the American Theater Wing in New York. He came to the United States 10 years ago and became a citizen five years ago. He is single.
1. Why did the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) hire Lloyd Hezekiah as the new Assistant Director in 1967?

2. Why did BAM start to diversify their programing?

3. Mr. Hezekiah stated: "We are making a definite attempt to make the academy like a performing arts center, like Lincoln Center." What different types of events would you expect to find at a performing arts center?

4. Describe the new lecture series discussed in the article.
Brooklyn Academy To Sever Its Link With Parent Body

By ANNA KISSELGOFF

The Brooklyn Academy of Music will become an independent cultural institution operated by a private nonprofit body, the St. Felix Street Corporation, instead of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, the 113-year-old academy's parent organization since 1936.

The move, which was announced yesterday at a press conference at the academy by August Heckscher, the city's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Administrator, is expected to facilitate the academy's own fund-raising efforts and also free the institute of responsibility for the kind of performing arts deficits the institute's trustees felt the parent group could no longer support.

The institute also operates the Brooklyn Museum, the Brooklyn Children's Museum and the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens. Since 1952, the Institute has leased the academy building, at 30 Lafayette Avenue, from the city at $1 per year. The city also provides funds for the building's maintenance, supplies and some educational programming.

These funds, although earmarked for the academy, were channeled through the institute. Mr. Heckscher and Sebastian Leone, Brooklyn's borough president, both said yesterday that they would urge the Board of Estimate on Oct. 28 to approve a resolution transferring $318,000 from the city's present allocation to the institute into the Parks Administration budget. The funds would then be turned over to the St. Felix Street Corporation. The new parent unit, whose chairman is Seth S. Faison and whose president is Donald M. Blinken, is named after a street bordering the academy.
1. What other institutions fell under the purview of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences?

2. Why did BAM want to break away from the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences?

3. Why did BAM want to break away from the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences?
Document 10 continued

Peter Sellars’s Zangezi.

Nina Wiener’s Wind Devil was in the 1985 festival.
1. The subtitle of the article is, “An Avant-Garde Powerhouse Grows in Brooklyn.” The images are of avant-garde performances. Looking at the four images of DOCUMENT 10, define “avant-garde” in your own words.

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2. With DOCUMENT 10 and the information gained from previous documents, how did the type of art presented at BAM change?

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3. Chose one of the three smaller images and describe it. What do you think the actors/dancers are trying to portray (feelings, story, etc.)? Explain your answer.

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For more than a century, the Brooklyn Academy of Music was just one theater, originally on Montague Street in Brooklyn Heights and later replaced, in 1908, by a Beaux-Arts building on Lafayette Avenue in Fort Greene.

But then the academy added the BAM Harvey Theater in 1987. And a decade later, it turned a playhouse in the Lafayette Avenue building into a cinema complex. Then, just a few years ago, the academy opened another theater, the BAM Fisher, next door.

And so it has gone for a performing arts center whose growth has mirrored and, in many ways, helped drive the real estate and cultural boom in Downtown Brooklyn.

In what is being heralded as the last piece of its evolution (at least for now), BAM is preparing one more addition. The academy announced on Friday a $25 million building project to link three of its spaces, create permanent visual art galleries and provide new patron amenities.

“It will unite the whole block,” said Karen Brooks Hopkins, BAM’s longtime president, who stepped down in June. “This is the last piece of the BAM campus.”

Much has changed at the academy since it first opened in 1861. Its current Fort Greene neighborhood is now considered among New York’s most desirable — and expensive — residential areas.

New York City has funneled some $100 million into the Brooklyn Cultural District, which includes more than 40 nonprofit visual, performing and media arts organizations like the Mark Morris Dance Center, Theater for a New Audience and the BRIC House arts center. The district is roughly bordered by Flatbush Avenue, Fulton Street, Hanson Place and St. Felix Street. In addition, the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts recently announced that it was moving from one part of the district to another. And the Center for Fiction is moving to the area from its longtime Manhattan home on East 47th Street.

It is partly because of all this growth that BAM felt it was important to initiate an expansion that would help establish an anchor on the cultural district’s northern border.

The project is called BAM Strong, for the Strong siblings, children of Brigitte Vosse, the main donor and a trustee. The expansion will connect the BAM Harvey Theater (at 651 Fulton Street)
with a vacant site (653 Fulton Street) and the ground floor of a high-rise condominium at 230 Ashland Place.

“We need to have that presence on the corner as the neighborhood gets built up — we want to make sure our patrons know there’s a BAM Harvey down the street,” said Alan H. Fishman, the academy’s chairman. “The world around BAM is changing so rapidly, and the world around Brooklyn is changing so rapidly, you’ve got to react to it.”

While BAM helped pave the way for pioneering theater, music and dance, it initially struggled to attract theatergoers to what was once a gritty area. Until 2013, the academy provided the BAMbus, to transport audience members to and from Manhattan. Now, BAM is considered the elder statesman of the avant-garde, a model that has been widely emulated around the world.

“When I got to New York, it was this funky organization,” said Tom Finkelpearl, the city’s cultural affairs commissioner. “It’s become this absolute powerhouse of an organization with amazing capacity and breadth.”

The city has contributed $6.2 million to the latest project. BAM has raised $17 million so far. Work is to begin shortly and will continue over the next two years, with completion scheduled for September 2017.

The project calls for new balcony seating in the Harvey and a one-story structure at 653 Fulton Street between BAM’s sites at 651 Fulton Street and 230 Ashland Place, which will have a cafe on the ground floor.

The properties facing Fulton Street will be connected by a new canopy that telegraphs BAM’s presence. “The idea is to use the marquee to connect the iconic old theater facade and adjacent spaces as a monolithic whole,” said Paul Broches, a partner at Mitchell Giurgola Architects, the project’s designer.

The Harvey, in a former 1904 vaudeville theater that became a first-run movie house before it was abandoned, has not received much attention since it was originally renovated by Hugh Hardy in 1987 to be the performing arts center’s second, somewhat smaller theater.

“We have to improve the Harvey customer experience,” Mr. Fishman said. “We’re going to make the people who sit in the balcony a lot happier.”

There will also be a visual art exhibition space and a sculpture terrace featuring art commissioned as part of a new public art program that was announced in June.

“Part of the branding of BAM will be bringing art and theater together,” Mr. Broches said. With $3.5 million from the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust, BAM plans to use public art to define and connect sites on its campus.

While BAM has presented visual art programming before, this project represents an effort to do so in a more deliberate, continuing way. “If we get it right, it will make the visual arts program that much more interesting,” Mr. Fishman said, “much like the cinema program was at the beginning.”
The institution has also secured space on the second and third floors of a residential tower currently under construction by Two Trees Management on the south site of the cultural district. The space will feature movies and the organization’s archives and is to be called the BAM Karen after Ms. Hopkins, who has been succeeded by Katy Clark, most recently of the Orchestra of St. Luke’s.

“Having defined cultural uses in the bases of these buildings — whether it’s BAM or other institutions — that’s the most important thing,” Ms. Hopkins said, “to keep the district from turning into a bunch of chain stores and Anywhere, U.S.A.”

1. What are the different spaces that BAM utilizes?
2. What will the new building be used for?

3. The BAM Hamm Archives, mentioned at the end of the article, currently resides at Metrotech in Downtown Brooklyn. What types of documents do you think you’d find in BAM’s archive? Be specific.

4. Brooklyn is becoming more and more expensive. If you were in charge, how would you insure that everyone could access the art and culture BAM has to offer?
REFLECTION

What are three questions you still have about BAM?

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What type of art/performance would you like to see presented at BAM?

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GLOSSARY

**Avant-garde:** new and often very surprising ideas in art, literature, etc.

**Bunting:** flags or decorations that are made of thin cloth or paper

**Chrysalis:** a butterfly cocoon, often used to describe something not fully formed

**Eclat:** brilliant display or effect

**Festoon:** to cover or decorate (something) with many small objects, pieces of paper, etc.

**Neo-Italianate Style:** designed in the style of old Italian buildings