

Society of American Archivists Council Meeting Chicago, IL

Performing Arts Section: Annual Report (Prepared by: Helice Koffler)

Year: 2024- 2025

Current Rosters: Helice Koffler, Co-Chair, 2023-2025; Meghan Glassbrenner, Co-Chair, 2024-2026; Chloe Walker, Steering Committee Member, 2024-2026; Hollis Wittman, Steering Committee Member, 2024-2026; Jill Higgs, Web Liaison/Social Media Manager, 2024-indefinite

Council Liaison: Alison Clemens

PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

(Please indicate all projects and activities that your component group has completed this year, continues to work on, or plans to implement in the following fiscal year.)

Completed: Meet and Greet series for 2024-2025

Building on the success of the series begun last year, PAS held seven virtual meetings with special guests between September 2024 and April 2025: **Robinson McClellan**, Associate Curator of Music Manuscripts and Printed Music at the Morgan Library & Museum discussed the exhibition, "Crafting the Ballet Russes: The Robert Owen Lehman Collection (September 10, 2024); **Greg Prickman**, Interim Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library discussed new opportunities in exhibitions and programming that the Folger's recently completed four-year renovation project has made possible (November 19, 2024); **Philip Milnes-Smith**, Digital Archivist for Shakespeare's Globe presented on a grant-funded project at Shakespeare's Globe to create inclusive thematic finding aids for the collections utilizing community input from an intersectional advisory panel (December 4, 2024); **Dr. Caroline Hamilton**, curator of exhibition at the McNay Art Museum, *Women Artists of the Ballets Russes: Designing the Legacy* (January 9, 2025); **Melissa Ziobro**, Curator of the Bruce Springsteen Archives & Center for American Music (BSACAM) gave an overview of the Center's history, programmatic and exhibition efforts to date (February 6, 2025); **Dr. R. Scott Blackshire**, gave a presentation, "Performance as Curatorial Practice: The Tobin Theatre Collection" (March 28, 2025); **Robert W. Schneider**, spoke about the American Theatre Archive, an initiative recently launched to promote access to primary research materials documenting the art form (April 21, 2025). A scheduled meeting with members of ChromaDiverse had to be postponed due to scheduling conflicts.

Five recordings from this year's series have been added to our new YouTube page, along with two from the previous year.

Produced guidelines for submissions to relaunched newsletter; chose new design template.

Ongoing:

Publish first issue of the new *Performance!* newsletter.
Manage social media platforms, including Instagram and YouTube.
Plan programming for Meet and Greet Series.

New:

SAA STRATEGIC PLAN

(Please review the current [Strategic Plan](#) and indicate below how the component group has or plans to contribute to one or more of the four main goals.)

Goal 1: Advocating for Archives and Archivists

The Section has provided a space for archivists from a variety of institutions and backgrounds to share their work and their collections, including during an open forum at the section's annual meeting.

Goal 2: Enhancing Professional Growth

The Section has done considerable work in enhancing professional growth through its active Meet and Greet series, which provides educational and networking opportunities. We have connected American archivists with colleagues from Canada, France, and the UK to share experiences. We also have collaborated with independent curators and scholars, as well as museum and library professionals in the field of performing arts archives and documentation.

Goal 3: Advancing the Field

The Section has solicited suggestions from section members during the election and used them to inform section programming.

Goal 4: Meeting Members' Needs

The Section has planned programs and highlighted resources that relate directly to the professional interests and education of members.

SAA ANNUAL MEETING

Number of attendees: 38

Link to meeting minutes:

Summary of meeting activities and highlights:

Our annual business meeting also included a panel discussion on the challenges of caring for costumes in archives and museum collections with **Caroline Hamilton**, Costume Curator, Jacob's Pillow, **Sunae Park Evans**, Senior Costume Conservator, National Museum of American History, **John Tomasicchio**, Associate Director of Archives, The Metropolitan Opera, **Stephanie Vaillant**, Archives Manager, Stratford Festival, **Katie Wilson**, Archivist and Digital Asset Manager, National Ballet of Canada (July 30, 2025).

SELF-ASSESSMENT

How would you describe the health or energy of the group, and how engaged are the members?

The attendance at our meetings was excellent as was the response to our speakers of whom many questions were asked. The audience tends to be composed of about 50% members, and 50% non-members. We have had interest in the newsletter and opportunities to contribute to our social media.

Did the component group's leadership encounter any challenges in achieving its goals for the year?

We probably were overly ambitious in our scheduling of the meet and greet events, which took time away from the newsletter and other projects. We have had ongoing difficulties recruiting members to run for elected positions and to volunteer for appointed positions, like the newsletter.

What suggestions do you have for the SAA Council and staff that might help address these challenges in the coming term?

Rethink the membership model. While lack of time and already being burnt out and overextended from work makes people reluctant to serve in leadership roles, the cost of being a member is prohibitive for many. I have felt guilty getting people, especially students, to join SAA so they can serve when the benefits are unclear. While having the Section annual business meetings online is a boost to participation, the scheduling of them so far ahead of the annual meeting is added pressure and creates a disconnect that diminishes the importance of Section membership. It was hard to choose among Sections in the past when several meetings were scheduled concurrently, but the current practice makes it easier to forget about completely.

What questions or concerns do you have for the SAA Council and staff?