



Theatre BC

Promoting the Development of Theatre in B.C. since 1932

P.O. Box 2031, Nanaimo, B.C., V9R 6X6

Phone: (250) 714-0203 FAX: (250) 714-0213

www.TheatreBC.org email: webmaster@theatrebc.org

A Brief History of Theatre BC For the Love of Theatre

Over 65 years old, Theatre BC (TBC) is one of Canada's liveliest grassroots arts organizations. TBC is proud parent to over 80 community theatre groups across the province and Yukon Territory, assisting the growth and development of what used to be referred to as amateur dramatics. TBC is a vital, thriving umbrella organization nurturing the spirit of community theatre—an association of people involved in theatre solely out of a love of the stage. TBC and its members foster the growth of professionalism, for always behind the fun is a serious-minded pursuit of excellence.

TBC owes its start to one of the province's colourful historic characters, Major "Bill" Bullock-Webster, who took up touring as an actor, stage manager and producer upon his arrival in Canada early this century. In 1923, Major Bill established the B.C. Drama Festival Association out of an office in the Legislative Buildings. Its goals were to establish as many theatre groups as possible in the province and hold festivals, the first of which was in April of 1932 at the Crystal Gardens in Victoria. By 1939, there were more than 178 member groups in B.C. and the festival was an annual event. One of TBC's co-founders was Jessie Richardson, whose lifetime of encouraging and enriching theatre activities in British Columbia was formally recognized by TBC in 1981 with the creation of the Jessie Richardson Scholarship.

During the war years TBC continued, but at a diminished level of activity. The constraints of wartime forced temporary abandonment of the provincial festival in favour of regional ones, and at this point the zones began to take on more responsibility for administering community theatre. Immediately after the war and indeed until 1952, TBC existed in name only; most of the work of encouraging and increasing community theatre was done by the Department of Education's School and Community Drama Branch. In 1953, the provincial festival was resurrected in Vernon. Since then the festival, originally non-competitive and limited to one-act plays, has been held in all regions of the province. TBC has enjoyed a long period of sustained growth since the 1960's.

Community Theatre Comes of Age!

Today TBC develops community-based theatre through regional workshops, zone and MAINSTAGE festivals, an annual playwriting competition and a theatrical workshop series call BACKSTAGE. TBC provides member groups with itinerant professionals who can be called upon for expertise, guidance and workshops in particular areas of the discipline, such as directing, acting, technical work, promotion and audience development. It promotes the importance of theatrical expression at the amateur level, and acts as a lobby group to provide a united public voice regarding political issues that affect theatre and the arts in general.