

## From Humble but Notable Beginnings

The earliest establishment of a formal arts school in Nelson began in 1957 as a two week summer school of music. Conceived by founding directors Ed Baravalle and Bain Oliver, the primary emphasis was on the performing arts, due to the founders' backgrounds in music and theatre, and was run as a private society. Ed Baraville was a former musical director with MGM pictures in Hollywood and employed as a music teacher at LV Rogers Highschool in the 1950's. Bain Oliver had been involved with the Nelson Little Theatre, the Shakespeare club and was the founding president of Overture Concerts in Nelson.

A legal society was formed in June 1958 with the establishment of the Nelson Summer School of Fine Art under the BC Societies Act, distinguishing it as the first privately run art school in the province. The chief aim of the society was, "To promote, establish and maintain among the members of the Society and others an interest in all the fine arts and crafts."

By the following year, the summer school course offerings expanded to include more of the visual arts. Courses in ceramics, pottery, and weaving were offered in addition to music, drama, and ballet. Courses ran for four weeks and took place at LV Rogers highschool and in the gym at Hume School.

The success and reputation of the Nelson School of Fine Arts resulted in rapid expansion, featuring artists of international renown such as Arnold Spohr, director of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, noted baritone Robert (Bobby) McFerrin.

A year-round art school was thought to be a natural progression in the minds of the summer school founders and a brief was submitted to the provincial government requesting funding for a year-round art school to which Premier Bennett and his cabinet replied, "Why don't you first try to see what you can develop for yourselves; then return to discuss the matter?"

And so they did...