



Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn

## Educating Youth to Like Theatre Seen as Investment for Future

By OLIVE DICKASON

Legitimate theatre is faced with a problem in Canada . . . the small size of the audiences that it usually manages to attract.

"There is one possible way out of this difficulty," Hume Cronyn, well-known Canadian-born actor, said in an interview yesterday, "and that is to educate young people into the habit of going to the theatre."

Mr. Cronyn, who with his wife, Jessica Tandy, is appearing in "The Fourposter" at Her Majesty's, admitted such an educational program is no simple matter. To get the young people to the theatre, it is first of all necessary to reduce prices.

"We have been trying to encourage a program whereby students can get seats at a reduced price on nights when the theatre isn't filled," Mr. Cronyn said. "But it's a new idea, and like all new ideas it has to be sold."

The theory behind such a plan, the actor explained, is to get young people into the habit of going to live theatre. "The habit pattern will likely continue when they be-

come adults. It's a sort of investment in a future audience."

### Many Years

Mr. Cronyn admitted that it would take many years to make the program effective. But he held that if legitimate theatre is to take its full part in the cultural life of this country, it will have to be encouraged in some such way.

On nights when 50 or more students attend a performance, Mr. Cronyn and Miss Tandy sometimes arrange for a question and answer period afterwards with the students. "We haven't decided whether this really develops interest in the theatre or not," Mr. Cronyn said. "What we do know is that it makes for a tough schedule after spending most of the evening onstage."

Baby sitters are also causing difficulties.

"Believe it or not, baby sitting has become a definite worry," Mr. Cronyn said. "Many young couples just can't afford the price of tickets as well as that of a sitter, so they just don't come to the theatre."

One answer to this, which has been tried out with some success in the United States, but not with much luck in Canada, is the 7 p.m. curtain-time. The idea here is that the earlier time makes it easier to get sitters, and for a cheaper rate, than the orthodox 8 or 8.30 p.m. opening. It also helps in the case of those who work downtown, allowing them to get back home earlier after a performance.

Mr. Cronyn was born in London, Ont., and started his theatrical career by organizing the McGill Players. Jessica Tandy is from England.