

# Home-grown Theatre Vital Part Of Community Life, Says Actress

By OLIVE DICKASON

A long-held hope is being at least partly realized for Elfi Koenig these days.

A theatrical group that she has been instrumental in gathering together under the name of Canadian Players is presenting its first performance this week: *The Happy Time*, at Her Majesty's.

This in itself is quite an achievement, but Montrealer Elfi has her sights set higher yet. She would dearly love to see Montreal's long-felt need realized for a music hall and theatre.

"The theatre should be right in the hearts of people, a part of the community," she said in an interview last night. "After all, why should we look to New York or to internationally known stars for all our theatre? We have lots of talent right here."

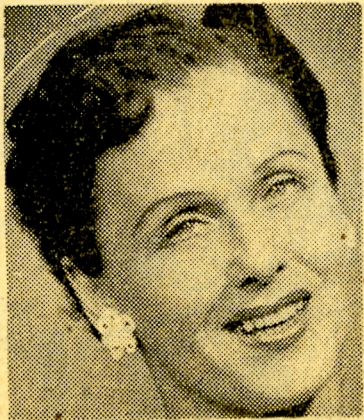
## In Vienna

The auburn-haired actress recalled the days when she played in Vienna. "When you play in the same place for 10 years, the people get to know you, and you get to know and love the people. Every little town in Austria has its theatre and its own group which puts on performances year after year. Children start going to the theatre at an early age, and get to know and love it."

Elfi trained as a dancer and singer . . . she still takes singing

lessons . . . and made her career in comedy. Now that she's married to Montrealer Louis Levin and a resident of this city of four years' standing, she's working to establish a year-round theatrical group Canadian Players, of which she and Barry Morse are co-managing directors, is the answer to that hope.

The fact that so many such groups have been born here only to die, is evidence of how difficult it is.



Elfi Koenig

For one thing, as Elfi explained, costs are exceedingly high, not just for players but for stage hands and orchestras as well.

## Play A Month

In spite of this, Elfi and her companions plan to produce a play a month, each performance to last about eight days. She is playing the part of Mignonette in *The Happy Time*.

"That way, our group will become better known . . . and who knows? We may eventually get a theatre!"

She referred to Vancouver's Totem Theatre, which for the past two years has been having such success giving year-round performances in that city that it plans to build a theatre next summer.

Elfi was pleased about the fact that children are allowed to legitimate theatre in the province of Quebec, though they may not attend movies. Children, she said, have a natural appreciation of theatre, and if this is encouraged it could do much towards building a native theatre here.

When she isn't involved in problems of the stage, Elfi has two big loves: horses and gardening. She works long and hard on the grounds of her Dorval home. "It's a wonderful way to relax and to forget your troubles," she smiled.