

arts & entertainment

Stanford festival honors playwright's career

Free summer movies! They start tonight with a screening on the Stanford campus, open to the public, of director Joseph Losey's disturbing 1967 film "Accident," starring Dirk Bogarde.

Famed English playwright Harold Pinter wrote the screenplay, and tonight's film kicks off a month-long

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Harold Pinter Festival, presented by Stanford Summer Theater. Critic Mick LaSalle will introduce tonight's free movie, and host an audience-participation discussion afterwards.

Playwright Harold Pinter turns 75 this year. In his honor, Stanford Summer Theater will produce four Pinter plays,

screen five films for which he wrote screenplays, and hold a community seminar on the playwright's theater and movie work, as well as on his poetry and politics.

Pinter was a young London actor in the 1950s. He wrote a play that was originally a flop, but became a hit six months later and was the beginning of his playwrighting career.

Much of Pinter's work is about the unspoken dark places in

male/female relationships. In a typical Pinter play, couples talk sparingly and ambiguously, soaked in a dense subtext of unstated hostile sexual innuendo. Much of Pinter's drama is between the lines, in the feelings that men and women are unable to express to each other.

This style creates an emotional hall of mirrors, where it's often unclear exactly what is going on, but in which the atmosphere is highly charged. Fear looms large. Laughter is a release.

Pinter once said he learned his style of dialogue as a poor Jewish boy growing up in dangerous East London, needing to talk his way through rough parts of town. He learned to engage bullies in delay-tactic conversations until he reached safety.

Pinter's plays "The Lover" and "Night" open this Thursday on a double bill. Additional late night weekend shows include the edgy "The Applicant" and "The Collection."

"The Lover" contains an original jazz score by local guitarist Lenny Carlson. Stanford acting teacher Kay Kostopoulos, who performs in "The Lover," and who also sings jazz locally Tuesdays in Palo Alto at Cafe Fino says, "Anyone who thinks of Pinter as dry or 'cerebral' will certainly be surprised by this production."

A Pinter community symposium open to the public on July 20 will discuss his playwrighting, screenwriting, poetry and politics, and show clips of his work as an actor. Panel



EDGY — Rush Rehm and Kay Kostopoulos perform in "The Lover" as part of Stanford Summer Theater's month-long Harold Pinter Festival. Daily News photo by John Todd.