

Arts & Entertainment

A weekly magazine of music, theater, art, movies and more, edited by Robyn Israel

Rush Rehm and Kay Kostopoulos
co-star in Stanford Summer
Theater's production
of "The Lover."

Carnal knowledge

Stanford festival
honors
playwright
Harold Pinter

by Terry Tang

In 1962, while Edward Albee was introducing American theatergoers to George and Martha, the dysfunctional spouses at the heart of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf," Harold Pinter got British audiences intimately acquainted with Richard and Sarah.

On the surface, the duo seems like the embodiment of sweet, late '50s domesticity; Richard works in the city while Sarah keeps house. Yet, they are oddly comfortable addressing each others' extramarital activities in the same civilized English manner that one would talk about afternoon tea. But like the calm before the storm, it's only a matter of time before psychological warfare breaks out.

Now, 29 plays and 21 screenplays later, Harold Pinter's multi-layered depiction of marriage and sexual politics in "The Lover" is the centerpiece of the Stanford Summer Theater's (SST) program. To honor Pinter's 75th birthday and his broad work as a poet, screenwriter, actor, director and political activist, SST is packaging three other short works, five film screenings and a community symposium into a Harold Pinter Festival that will run through Aug. 8. A theatrical extravaganza appears fitting for the Tony Award winner whose name spawned a new literary adjective — Pinteresque — in the English language.

Kay Kostopoulos, a lecturer and acting instructor in Stanford's Continuing Studies Program, didn't think twice about taking on the role of a conservative, yet possibly desperate housewife. Having taught "The Lover" in her classes, she knows full well what a challenging and meaty part Sarah is.

"When you hear that she has a lover, it's kind of a shock to the audience," said Kostopoulos, who first suggested "The Lover" for the festival. "When she's with her lover, she completely turns around. She's very sexy, sensuous. She gets [to be] a victim and turns around and becomes in control of her partner. She changes roles from receiver.

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