

COMMUNITY STAGE

Rutgers theater to present one-act trio by Pinter

Other Places

When: Friday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 2 and 8 p.m.

Where: Cabaret Theater, Nichol Avenue and Suydam Street, New Brunswick

How much: \$8 general public, \$5 students, call (732) 846-2134

By Bette Spero

STAR-LEDGER STAFF

Mention "Other Places" to Kenneth Urban in New Brunswick, and he smiles. Despite the 24-year-old director's relative youth, he already knows a lot more about British dramatist Harold Pinter than most New Jersey theater folk learn in a lifetime.

"Other Places" is a program of three short Pinter plays seldom seen in these parts: "Family Voices," "One for the Road" and "A Kind of Alaska." The triple-bill plays Friday and Saturday at the Cabaret Theater of Rutgers University.

Urban is studying at the university's Mason Gross School of the Arts for his doctorate in English. He teaches Expository Writing this semester and expects to teach Black Drama this summer. It was while he studied for his undergraduate degree at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pa., that he discovered Pinter's plays.

As part of his Bucknell studies, he spent a semester in London 3½ years ago. There he saw Pinter, a sometime actor, starring in one of his early plays, "The Hothouse," written circa

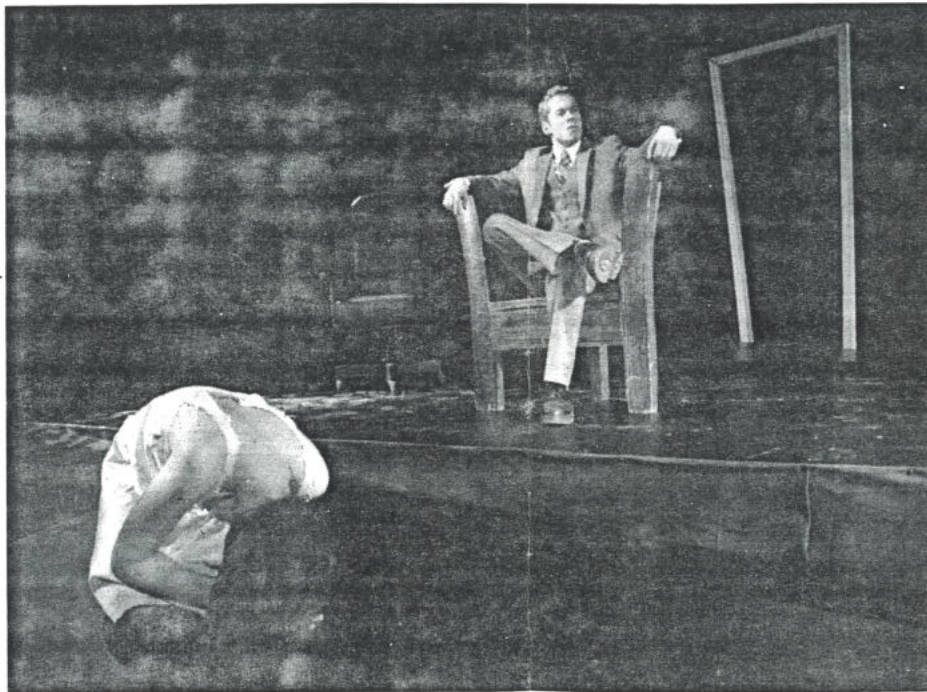


PHOTO BY NOAH ADDIS

Ruth Darcy, left, and Justin Romeo rehearse a scene from "One for the Road," a play in "Other Places," a three-play program at the Cabaret Theatre at Rutgers University in New Brunswick.

1958, around the time of his far more celebrated "The Caretaker."

"What attracts me to Pinter's work is his sparse language," says Urban. "It's concise and yet, the drama is fully drawn, so you can do a lot on stage in 30 or 40 minutes."

This three-play program is an

hour and 45 minutes, with no intermission. Urban calls it "intense." There's a cast of six. Except for Zack Roth, a Londoner who's a Yale University graduate, the others are Rutgers students: Ruth Darcy, Kelly George, Blythe Gillespie, Justin Romeo and Dan Wiener. Rutgers stu-

dents Ray DeJohn and Ryan P. Ramage are producer and stage manager, respectively.

While browsing in a bookstore, Urban came across two of the plays, "Family Voices" and "A Kind of Alaska." They even were on sale, he notes. The third play, "One for the

Road," he came across later and found it fit in nicely with the other two. All three were written in the early 1980s.

"Family Voices" comprises three interconnecting monologues drawn from letters a son and his mother and father write to one another. "A Kind of Alaska" centers on a woman who wakes up after 29 years; it also concerns her relationship with her doctor. "One for the Road" is about political torture — but with Pinter's twist, the tortures are depicted as seductions.

The budget is only \$1,200, but it's enough to stage the plays in the simple theater space that holds about 60 spectators. A few chairs, a couple of stools, a desk, a bed and some slide projections are the sets and props. Paul Stolen, a Mason Gross student, is the designer. "I hate elaborate sets — ones where faucets work with running water," remarks Urban.

When Urban, a native of Medford in South Jersey, began his own university studies at Bucknell, he chose chemical engineering. But it wasn't long before he changed his major to English. Pinter's ambiguous writing intrigued him. It still does.

"Since the Cabaret Theater isn't driven by economics, we don't have to do the same plays everyone else is doing," comments Urban. "Psychological realism doesn't interest me. Neither does restaging Chekhov. And I'm not interested in A.R. Gurney plays about wealthy suburban people. Pinter is different. He's difficult — even disturbing — for audiences."