

Pinter celebrates 'Old Times' in Hancock Park

By Hunter Drohojowska

Well-dressed men and women, cocktails in hand, circle one another, chatting with restrained conviviality. Occasionally, eyes meet in covert flirtation. The Hancock Park home is spacious, appointed with stately English furniture. The amiable host urges self-conscious guests toward the cold buffet. Much is left unsaid. The ambiance could be called "Pinteresque" — and with good reason. The party is a welcome for the cast of Harold Pinter's play "Old Times."

After Wednesday night's L.A. premiere at the Henry Fonda Theater, the three actors — Liv Ullmann, Nicola Pagett and Pinter himself — retired to the home of British Acting Consul General Desmond and Anna O'Mahony. Pinter, who carries a perpetually startled look in his eyes, roamed comfortably among the guests. Asked about his return to the stage, he said, "This is the first time I've acted in 17 years, but before that I acted for 12 years. I thought the audience was very sharp tonight."

That audience included Karl Malden, Ray Strickland, director Henry Jaglom with actress Andrea Marcovicci, Virginia Mayo, Julie Harris, Linda Thorson, Deborah May, rock star Don Henley with Maren Jensen and Peter Asher.

Pinter, who came to the party with his wife, novelist and historian Lady Antonia Fraser, met fellow countryman Rex Harrison, who hadn't attended the play because he was performing in "Aren't We All?" at the Wilshire. Producer Duncan Weldon brought both plays to the

States from the Haymarket Theatre in London.

Playwright Donald Freed, at the party with his wife, Patty, is enthusiastic about Pinter's agreement to direct his "Circe and Bravo" in London. Of Pinter's performance, Freed added, "He knows why those pauses are there. That's the subtext that makes an important play."

Julie Harris, who saw a production of "Old Times" in New York, echoed his sentiments. "This is the kind of play I'd like to see over and over and over and over."

Others who gave their nods of approval included director Jose Quintero and the Mark Taper Forum's Gordon Davidson, with wife Judy, and actress Samantha Eggar. Despite a few mutterings in the crowd about the ambiguous ending, Pinter's "Old Times" looks like obligatory viewing for L.A.'s intellectual set.



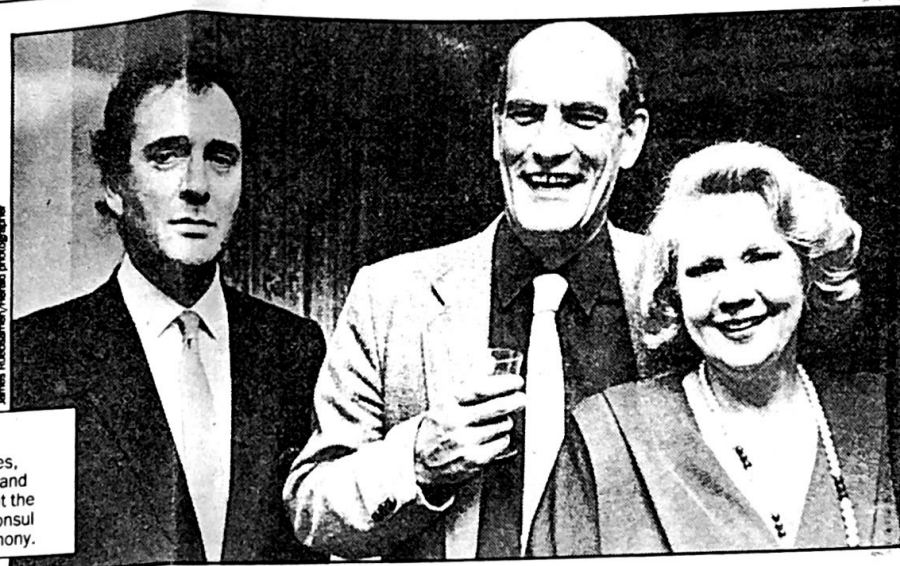
Rex Harrison couldn't attend the play because he was appearing in "Aren't We All?" But he made the party.



Liv Ullmann, left, and Nicola Pagett star, along with Harold Pinter, in Pinter's play "Old Times."



Director Jose Quintero joined Savannah Smith at the post-play bash.



Playwright Harold Pinter, left, David Jones, director of "Old Times," and Virginia Mayo gathered at the home of British Acting Consul General Desmond O'Mahony.

Hunter Drohojowska writes regularly for the Herald.