



FILM: **IDA**

FDG RATING: 3.9



Pawel Pawlikowski: *Director, Screenplay,*

Agata Trzebuchowska: *Actress: Ida/Anna*

Agata Kulesza: *Actress: Wanda (Anna's aunt)*

DATE: June 22, 2014

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **IDA**

Both *Ida* and *The Immigrant* are very powerful, emotionally gripping stories about survival but our outspoken critics believe that the characters in *Ida* are more complex and the story much more reflective and memorable. In contrast to the visually stimulating Hollywood film style of James Gray for *The Immigrant*, Pawlikowski's stark, black and white, bleak, somewhat minimalistic, filming style of *Ida* moves at a slower pace with continual expressive pauses of silence. In *Ida*, the pauses offer time for reflection about the life altering survival choices that *Ida*'s family and neighbors made, (slowly revealed in the film), and life choices that *Ida* as well as her aunt must make now.

Set in 1961 Poland, during the Stalinist dictatorship, eighteen year old Anna, who has lived all her life as a sheltered orphan in the convent, is preparing to take her vows to become a nun when her mother Superior orders her to visit her only living relative, an aunt in Lodz, before taking her vows. Venturing out from her secluded, naively innocent, simple convent life, Anna is exposed to the temptations and harsh reality of the world. Her abrasive, alcoholic, promiscuous, Jewish aunt, who is a minor state judge and Communist Party member with a mysterious past, informs Anna that she is Jewish and her name is *Ida*. Curious about her family, *Ida* travels with her aunt to the village where the family had lived. And so begins a journey of discovery about the choices made by *Ida*'s parents and her aunt who gave her son to be hidden with *Ida*'s parents while she worked in the resistance, and the Christian family who first hid *Ida*'s parents during the Nazi occupation of Poland and then killed them along with the Aunt's son when the risk to their Christian lives was too great. They made a choice to save *Ida*, leaving her at an orphanage, believing no one would suspect the infant was Jewish.

The strong, abrasive, outspoken aunt is a sharp contrast to the shy, innocent, softspoken *Ida*. But the strong versus weak roles reverse as the journey continues and *Ida* becomes somewhat mothering and nurturing to the aunt who is emotionally shattered as she confronts the horrors of her past and the choices she made to survive. The final life choices that *Ida* and her aunt make are unexpected as they each decide how to confront the present. For some of our critics, the film was too depressing. Others didn't like the stark cinematography and static photographic angles. Most of us passionately praised the film from all aspects even though as one critic commented, the director made you work, as he tediously pieced together information about the characters and their past. The film was not predictable and sometimes shocking. The choices that humans make to survive can be heartbreaking. One of our critics thought the most poignant scene was when the Christian son admitted killing the family that his father was hiding and feeding because he feared his parents would be killed if identified as harboring Jews. Most of us agreed it was a very interesting perspective on history and a memorable story. We cared deeply about the two main characters and felt the intensely broken mood of the country through the choices the characters make.

On a scale of 1 to 5, (5 is the best), we awarded *Ida* a well deserved 3.9 which is pretty close to a 4.



See you at the movies!

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Film Discussion Group (FDG) organizer