



FILM: **PAST LIVES**

FDG RATING: 4.1 ☺☺☺☺○

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Celine Song: *director*
Greta Lee: *actress, Nora*
Teo Yoo.: *actor, Hae Sung*

DATE: October 22, 2023

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **PAST LIVES**

The 2023 film, *Past Lives*, is a small intimate film, focused on the feelings that a young 12 year old boy, Hae Sung, has for his close childhood friend, Na Young, beginning as a pre-teen childish romance and then as young adults after they have lived separate lives for 24 years and are reunited for one fateful week. They both have tender memories of their feelings for each other, remembering their playful “date” in the park, just before Na Young and her parents emigrated to Toronto when she was 12 years old.

For many discussion participants, the scene in the Korean park is a favorite, with Hae Sung and Na Young playfully holding their umbrellas as they mimic the giant minimalist metal sculpture of a man with a jaw that hinges open and closed. They also climb in and out of the openings in a huge stone sculpture of two cubist faces, facing each other. It's an interesting contrast with the scene in New York when Hae Sung visits Nora (her American name) and they, as adults, stand motionless in front of a stone relief wall carved with two traditional human figures facing outward away from each other with a blank area of stone separating the two figures.

Hae Sung had finished his military service and moved to China for a language exchange. Nora had moved to New York to pursue her interest in writing and becoming a playwright, met Arthur Zaturansky at a writers retreat, experienced a sense of *In Yun*.... that the universe must have brought them together as a way of reuniting souls who shared a connection in previous lives ... they fall in love and marry. But we feel a stronger sense of *In Yun* between Nora and Hae Sung who has been looking for Na Young on Facebook, unaware of her name change. The focus returns to their tender relationship when he comes to New York for a week and visits her. But she is a different person now, a blend of Korean and American while he is very Korean. This is the most intriguing part of the film, watching Nora, Hae Sung, and Arthur interact with each other. We've all experienced the “what ifs” in our lives and this film asks that question in a very delicate manner.

One discussion participant especially liked the story of lives intersecting over the years, the love and longing and how there is not a simple answer. It was interesting that there was only a baseline plot bringing all the attention to their inner feelings, was another observation. Another comment was about the non-stereotypical reactions of Nora's husband. The scene in the bar is especially memorable as Nora sits awkwardly between her husband and Hae Sung.

The final scene, when Hae Sung and Nora hug and say good-bye, is, in a way, full circle because she says she used to cry a lot when they were young and Hae Sung always held her when she cried. As adults, Nora doesn't shed a tear, and seems to be burying all her emotions, but Hae Sung is practically in tears in every scene when they are together. After they part, Nora walks back to her apartment, and cries in Arthur's arms. This scene implies the closeness she had with Hae Sung has transferred to her closeness with Arthur.

One observant discussion participant wondered if the reason Hae Sung and Na Young had such a close affection for each other at such a young age was because they had a relationship in a past life.

Beautiful cinematography, great acting, minimalist in approach but full of emotion, we rated *Past Lives* a warmhearted 4.1 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best)



See you at the movies!
Adriane Dedic, adedic@pacbell.net
www.filmdiscussiongroup.com