



FILM: **TAR**

FDG RATING: 3.9

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

Todd Field: *director/writer*
Cate Blanchett: *actress, Lydia Tar*,
Noémie Merlant: *actress, Francesca*

DATE: December 18, 2022

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **TAR**

The 2023 award winning film, *Tar*, is a character study, psychological drama of a female composer/conductor who has reached monumental heights in the world of classical music and uses her status to narcissistically destroy the lives of others. Cate Blanchett is outstanding as Lydia Tar (winning Golden Globe for best actress), the first woman to ever conduct the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra who also is an esteemed teacher at Juilliard. In one of the first scenes we see her belittling one of her students during her lecture. She's intense, with a flamboyant style.

Tar is in the middle of preparing the biggest concerto of her life, days away from a live recording of Mahler's 5th Symphony (one discussion participant commented that Mahler is all about grandiosity) when she is accused of misconduct after Krista Taylor, a promising young conductor she had mentored, takes her own life. Tar's penchant for victimization continues as we watch her psychological and emotional state progressively spiral out of control to the point that she hears strange noises and has experiences that could be imaginary. "It is a brilliant depiction of someone unraveling", observed one discussion participant.

Tar even undermines her loyal assistant Francesca, who hoped to be appointed assistant conductor. A young female Russian cellist, Olga, catches Tar's eye and gets the coveted position although feisty, independent, Olga is not at all enamored with the famous conductor, despite many overly generous favors Tar showers upon her. Olga only wants to play the cello.

Abusive power has consequences. Francesca quits the orchestra and betrays her former boss to the authorities who are investigating the death of aspiring conductor Krista Taylor.

We are accustomed to stories of powerful male figures exploiting vulnerable young women, so it's a different perspective to see a female abusing her powerful status to victimize other females. Discussion comments applauded the film as ambitious and brave, fascinating, well crafted, outstanding performances in all the roles. Music aficionados enjoyed the classical music.

Cate Blanchett said the experience was a transformative one. "There's this intense electric feeling when you give the downbeat and you hear a huge sound coming back. It's something I didn't have. never lived before. In this space, standing on the podium, you really feel like the king or queen of the world."

Just as in great Shakespearian tragedies, the higher the status, the deeper the fall. The bizarre final scene shows Tar, in Asia, conducting the score for a video game series *Monster Hunter* in front of an audience of cosplayers dressed in costumes of the characters.

Tense and intriguing, we orchestrated a high pitched score of 3.9 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)



See you at the movies!
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