



FILM: **THE FATHER**

FDG RATING: 4.6 ☺☺☺☺☺

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

Florian Zeller: *director/co-writer*
Anthony Hopkins: *actor, Anthony*
Olivia Coleman: *actress, Anne*

DATE: July 18, 2021

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **THE FATHER**

In the Oscar nominated film, *The Father*, we see everything through 80 year old Anthony's confused mind as he succumbs to the mental decline of dementia. A stellar performance by Anthony Hopkins that earned him a deserving 2021 best actor Oscar. It's an unusual perspective for a film: inside looking out. We get just as confused as he is, seeing the same actor in different roles or characters who take on different identities depending on Anthony's recognition. Even his flat possibly isn't his flat but rather his daughter's flat as rooms and décor shift slightly so what you saw moments ago now has a vaguely different arrangement or color, causing you to doubt your own memory and observation skills.

Olivia Coleman is superb as his daughter Anne, who is trying to assess her father's needs (we learn she is not his favorite daughter, Lucy, who had died in an accident). In an early scene, she says she won't be staying in London because she's met someone and is moving to Paris to be with him. Anthony's immediate reaction is to feel wounded, lashing out accusing her of abandoning him while still maintaining an attitude of arrogant bravado. The quick shifts in countenance that Hopkins expresses are a marvel to watch, numerous critics called it the best performance of his lifetime. Anthony is charming, debonnaire listening to opera, even flirty at times with the new care giver, but in the blink of an eye becomes demanding and arrogant, keeping us engrossed, intrigued, and off balance as his moods and cognizance unexpectedly shift continuously. It's a bit of a wild ride with jumbled identities sauntering in and out.

One discussion participant described the film as a mystery since the viewer is trying to figure out what's really going on. Another discussion participant thought it would be depressing so was reluctant to watch it but found it fascinating instead being inside his brain of twisted neurons while at times he was surprisingly lucid. And by all accounts, the film is a very accurate portrayal of the progression of dementia. Another observation was that the film seemed a bit hallucinogenic. What makes it especially unsettling for Anthony is that his profession is engineering where everything makes sense. But things are no longer making sense all around him. The ending is very poignant. His frailty taking hold, he says he has no idea what's going on anymore – he feels like he's losing all the leaves from his branches.

Writer/director Florian Zeller, adapted his prize-winning, 2012 French play of the same name with the help of the co-writer, Christopher Hampton. Some discussion participants don't like when plays are made into movies but as one resident critic noted, despite the small set, it didn't feel like a play so was very successful as a film. And noting this is Zeller's directorial debut, described the film as astounding.

High scores were almost unanimous with one less enthusiastic 3.5. *The Father* spiraled upward to a resounding 4.6 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best).



See you at the movies!

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