

'The Father' tells a gripping tale of aging



Sony Pictures Classics

Olivia Coleman and Anthony Hopkins in a scene from "The Father" (2020).

BY MAKENZIE WHITTLE • The Bulletin

“**T**he Father” is one of those beautiful films that captures the heartbreaking reality of a situation so well that you will probably never want to watch it again. Based on director Florian Zeller’s stage play “La Père” and adapted by Zeller and Christopher Hampton, the film follows a man in his late 80s named Anthony (Anthony Hopkins) as his mind deteriorates from dementia.

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We see the world through Anthony’s eyes, the heartbreaking confusion associated with the disease, we see his daughter, Anne, appear as Olivia Coleman then as Olivia Williams and back again, we see scenes take place out of order so the viewer is fully immersed in the way his mind is working.

The film starts with a visit from his daughter who brings him his groceries and checks in on him after he has berated his home care worker and accused her of stealing his watch. She then happily tells him of her plans to move to Paris with a Frenchman she met.

Then Anne is suddenly gone, and we see Paul (Mark Gatiss), Anne’s husband, whom Anthony doesn’t recognize, and we are met with the idea that this may not be Anthony’s flat.

It’s not until about 20 minutes in that we see some semblance of linear storytelling when we focus on Anne for a moment.

Anthony awakens one morning to find the flat’s layout has changed around him. Anne interviews another caregiver, Laura (Imogen Poots), whom her father charms with dripping charisma before changing on a dime to a more cruel and petty demeanor, leaving Anne in tears.

We then shift back into Anthony’s perspective as he relives previous scenes, this time with the real Anne and Paul. We see jumps in time and place, and we are constantly pulled alongside him as pieces of his

More Information

“The Father”

97 minutes

Rated PG-13 for some strong language and thematic material.



Hopkins delivers a career best in a lifetime of remarkable roles, and Coleman wears every emotion — grief, annoyance, exhaustion, guilt and overall sadness — on her face, often all at the same time. You recognize everything immediately.

mind are slowly lost to the disease.

If you have had any kind of connection to watching loved one slowly lose themselves to dementia, it is hard to watch it unfold on screen in any capacity. What “The Father” does, and does extremely well, is tell its story through the mind of the person losing it. Editing scenes together in such a way to create a

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