



FILM: **GHOSTLIGHT**

FDG RATING: 4.0 😊😊😊😊⊙

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

Alex Thompson, Kelly O'Sullivan: *directors*  
Keith Kupferer: *actor, Dan*  
Katherine Kupferer: *actress, Daisy*

DATE: October 20, 2024

## DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **GHOSTLIGHT**

The 2024 film, *Ghostlight*, is about a father grieving over the death of his teen age son, Brian, but refusing to talk about what has happened while his teen age daughter is reacting to the tragedy by obnoxiously and loudly “acting out” and being mean to the younger brother while the mother seems to be the one trying to hold the family together.

The father, Dan, is a hefty construction worker, so a couple discussion participants thought it a bit unrealistic when he joins a small local theater group, after confronting the owner who initially shouted at him for making so much drilling noise in front of her business, but then encourages him to come to her group of “misfits”. We later learn that his daughter, Daisy, had been acting in many school performances which the father always attended. Naturally he doesn't tell the family where he's going when he attends nightly rehearsals.

The healing power of art is evident as the film progresses. The group is preparing for a production of *Romeo and Juliet* which mirrors the tragedy that Dan has experienced. “It's the elephant in the room” noted one discussion participant, referring to the tragic suicides of *Romeo and Juliet* as we learn that Dan's son had a suicide pact with his high school girlfriend because she was moving to Arizona with her family and Dan and his wife Sharon would not allow him to move to Arizona to be with her. Dan discovered their drug overdosed limp bodies in the backyard, tried CPR on both of them. The girl revives but his son doesn't. When the actor who was to be *Romeo* leaves the group, Dan takes the part, effectively mirroring his own tragedy. The weaving of Brian's suicide and attempt by his girlfriend with the plot of *Romeo and Juliet* was excellent in the opinion of one discussion participant who also especially liked the spoken excerpts from Shakespeare's tragic play. Dan, a middle aged man, playing opposite a young *Juliet* as star crossed lovers was too big of a stretch for one discussion participant.

Anger and blame are understandable reactions to what Dan has experienced. We see several scenes that show Dan has taken legal action against the girl's parents blaming the mother for making her drugs so easily accessible to her daughter.

A published critic noted that the screenplay tenderly taps into the complexities and necessities of the vulnerable connection we need as humans and that we often don't know how to help the ones we love. Some of us criticized the oversentimentality while others appreciated the emotional romanticism. Possibly a bit contrived when Dan imagines he sees his son in the stage wing during his performance, On the positive side, the gradual build up was well done. Performing the tragedy allowed Dan to express the emotions he had been holding back. We liked how the cathartic healing power of the theater was portrayed in the film and enabled a more satisfying ending since it brought the family together. In the final scenes, they are emotionally supporting each other and coping with their loss together.

The title underscores the theme. A ghost light enables one to navigate the theatre in the dark or in this story, a light to help guide the family through their tragedy.

Great performances, good character development, a poignant story, important message about how art can heal and enable transformation, meaningful music scores, and all on a small budget. *Ghostlight* received a bright score of 4.0 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)



See you at the movies!  
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