

## Live and In Person at the Tivoli Theatre!

# THE LOST LEONARDO

**Monday, November 8, 7:30 pm**

Reviewed by Fionnuala Halligan | Screen Daily | Not Rated | 90 Mins.

There's nothing quite like a good story, well-told. Danish director Andreas Koefoed uses all the polish of his experience — and that of his technical team — to tell the ripping yarn of the *Salvator Mundi*, the so-called lost Leonardo da Vinci. Discovered in a New Orleans auction house in 2005, it is now, and will long remain, the most expensive painting in the world, with one of the most hotly-contested provenances. *The Lost Leonardo* is one of those rare documentaries in which almost everyone involved volunteers their loose-lipped testimony, seemingly unconcerned as to the dubious light in which it may place them, and Koefoed turns it in at a snappy 96 minutes with all the bells and whistles of a doc crowd-pleaser.

Sony Pictures Classics swooped in to take worldwide rights (from Dogwoof) outside the UK, Germany and France during post-production and will release in US theatres from August 13 after its Tribeca launch. That says something of the label's expectations, and it helps that while Koefoed's story is filled to the brim with dodgy dealers, it doesn't actually field a real villain — a sort of *Catch Me If You Can* of the art world, in which the biggest baddie is also the biggest dupe. Streaming is a natural home for this title, and a Tribeca premiere followed by a theatrical release, accompanied by positive reviews, will set it in the right frame for wider consumption.

Unusually, *The Lost Leonardo* is credited to no fewer than five writers, but the seams are smooth in this three-act morality play where qualms are scant and art world egos run riot in the face of wealth and power and raw, dripping greed. There's a judicious doling-out of information here, so the viewer never quite knows what will happen next, although we do realize early on that this is a pacey film which starts out at incredible and will only move up the scale. We never see the third-rate New Orleans auction house where a "sleeping hunter" and an art dealer purchase a poor-condition ("overpainted") version of the *Salvator Mundi* for \$11,000 in 2005. They suspect this ratty picture is worth more — perhaps it's one of the many copies of the missing masterpiece painted during da Vinci's time.

They take Koefoed and the viewer through what happened next — namely, when they contacted New York University's Dianne Modestini for an opinion, and she declared it was the lost Leonardo

before restoring it herself, for an unspecified commission. Events take another turn when the UK's National Gallery put it in front of friendly experts and declared it authenticated. Yet no museum would buy it. Put it this way: the consortium which bought and restored it considered themselves lucky to get out of the game for \$86 million, but by that point there was a Russian oligarch and a Swiss "free port billionaire" in the frame, busy swindling each other and everyone else out of taxes.

By 2017, this painting would notch a world record at \$400 million (plus \$50-odd million in commissions), sold by Christie's in New York, and by this point we're talking about Saudi Arabia, a half-billion-dollar yacht, the Louvre, and French president Emmanuel Macron. The painting has never been seen in public since, and has not been properly authenticated. It seems impossible now that it ever will be, given the polarization of opinions and the sheer amount of money involved.

It's hard to be upset by the idea that greedy people have been swindled out of money by other greedy people but, as *The Lost Leonardo* shows, when you move into the world of global billionaires, politics, and the acquisition of art — which becomes just another way to raise more money — it's also hard not to be disgusted. People push and shove to get what they want and then push and shove for it to be what they wanted, even if they knew their purchase was "like buying a car that was in an accident."

Koefoed positions Modestini as the center anchor of this tale, allowing the viewer to make up their own mind about her place in the debate — although there's no doubt that it went far beyond what she expected, and that she has clearly profited from it as well. She's an interesting companion, but can't manage the dynamic shock value of two separate interludes. One is set in Geneva, and explains what free ports mean to the art market and the global billionaire economy. The testimony of Yves Bouvier about his 100 percent "mark up" on the Russian oligarch Dmitry Rybolovlev is an object lesson in self-justification and a terminal blow to the idea of honor amongst thieves. The second takes place in the Louvre, where it begins to look like geo-realpolitik will distort matters even further: that there really is nothing in this world that money can't buy.

Fittingly, DoP Adam Jandrup has an eye for the frame and a pleasing composition. Interviewees stare into the void which is the art world market, telling their truth as they see it. Sveinung Nygaard's score alternates between high choirs of choral aspiration to jaunty jet-set piano, fueling *The Lost Leonardo* through to our eventual realization that this is a da Vinci which will always be, in one way or another, lost to us.

### TIVOLI THEATRE

5021 Highland Avenue | Downers Grove, IL  
630-968-0219 | [www.classiccinemas.com](http://www.classiccinemas.com)  
\$7 After Hours Members | \$11 Non-Members

# GOLDEN VOICES

Monday, November 29, 7:30 pm

Reviewed by Gary Goldstein | LA Times | Not Rated | 88 Mins.

This bittersweet, heartfelt comedy about the 60ish Victor (Vladimir Friedman) and Raya (Maria Belkin), married Russian film-dubbers who move to Israel in 1990 after the collapse of the USSR, has much to impart about how immigrants must often reinvent themselves upon arrival in a new land. That includes making do with less as they reestablish their place in society, rethink their careers and reprove their worth. No small task.

For Victor and Raya, longtime stars in their homeland for dubbing such American and international films as “8 1/2,” “Spartacus” and “Kramer vs. Kramer” into Russian, there’s little need for their specialized talents in Israel. Still, they try to find gainful employment using their “golden voices” — but doing what?

This opens up a series of tense, amusing and pointed sequences as Victor and Raya circle their meager options, with the help of the want ads and several local Russian compatriots. One of the main issues is that, given the dearth of work for them as a couple, they’re forced to strike out on their own, which moves them apart professionally but, more importantly, emotionally.



For Raya, it means taking a job as a phone sex operator in a grim, industrial-type office, and using her youthful vocal stylings to satisfy the cravings of her lonely Russian male callers. The shy Raya, initially hesitant to jump into such sordid voice work, quickly (maybe too quickly?) finds her groove and impresses her shrewd but sympathetic boss, Dvora (Evelin Hagoel), with her seductive verbal abilities and skill at drawing repeat customers.

The glitch: Raya’s afraid to tell Victor what her real job is (the former Soviet Union’s sexual repressiveness remains an undercurrent here), so pretends instead that she’s selling perfume by phone. The more Raya hides, the more she blossoms at work — and the more skeptical her husband becomes.

Victor, meantime, has hooked up with an enterprising if cagey couple (Nadia Kucher, Vitali Voskoboinikov) who run an underground video store that rents Russian-dubbed versions of new films illegally shot off theater screens. Raya wants no part of this scam so Victor’s on his own as he finds himself precariously helping to shoot and dub these bootleg tapes. Suffice to say, it doesn’t end well.

Although Victor and Raya’s journeys impact each other, that they spend so much of the film apart limits the marital progress — or lack thereof — we see them make; the profundities of the situation get shortchanged.

Taking this more individualized approach was clearly a conscious decision for Ruman and his co-writer, Ziv Berkovich, whose script is inspired by their families’ real-life experiences, but narratively, it comes at a cost.

As is, the story tends to feel more episodic than organic. An extended stretch that finds Raya drawn to one of her needier phone sex clients and falling down a bit of a rabbit hole is poignant and beautifully performed but proves an overlong segue without a strong enough payoff.

In addition, except for Victor and Raya’s childlessness — a career-first choice made long ago — and an angry, late-breaking admission Raya makes about her husband, we don’t get enough sense of what their marriage was like before moving to Israel to understand its current troubled state. Victor’s insistence that Raya pose for a photo as she first deplanes in the Holy Land — and her grin-and-bear-it response — offers a nice, er, snapshot of their dynamic, but it doesn’t quite resonate.

That said, this evocative tale is worth experiencing for Belkin’s lovely, lived-in turn as a woman of a certain age trying to find her place in a world not of her making. She’s a pleasure to watch as she works wonders with her large, expressive eyes, generous mouth and blond curls. Her Raya is such a captivating character you wonder why Victor’s not as nuts about her as we are.

As for Friedman, he deftly infuses Victor with a visceral sense of sadness and longing and a love of the possibilities that movies can bring — whatever their language. His memories of past film-dubbing triumphs provide some wistfully moving beats. The supporting cast is also first-rate.

In Russian and Hebrew with English subtitles.

---

Please enroll me as a member of **THE AFTER HOURS FILM SOCIETY**. This annual membership entitles me to mailings, discounted admissions, and special group benefits.

\$25 Individual     \$45 Family     \$75 Sponsor     \$200 Corporate     \$500 Founder

Make check payable to **THE AFTER HOURS FILM SOCIETY** and send to P.O. Box 5266, Wheaton, Illinois 60189.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  New Member     Renewal

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. # \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Preferred: \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_  E-Mail Newsletter as a PDF

THE AFTER HOURS FILM SOCIETY is a not-for-profit organization. Thank you for your support!

# CAROL

**Monday, December 6, 7:30 pm**

Reviewed by Ann Hornaday | Washington Post | Rated R | 119 Mins.

*In early 1950s Manhattan, Therese Belivet meets an older woman, Carol Aird and the two start a romantic but forbidden affair.*

“Carol,” an adaptation of a 1952 novel by Patricia Highsmith directed by Todd Haynes, sweeps the viewer up into a heady, exquisitely choreographed dream, casting as beguiling a spell as its seductive title character. Carol Aird (Cate Blanchett) is a stylish New Jersey homemaker doing some last-minute Christmas shopping in Manhattan when she spies a watchful shop girl named Therese. The two have a perfectly unimportant interaction about dolls and toy trains, ending in a sale, when something cataclysmic happens: Carol turns on her way out, smiles slyly and, pointing to the Santa cap Therese wears with obvious discomfort, says, “I like the hat.”



It’s an electrifying moment, and for Therese, who’s portrayed by Rooney Mara in an Audrey Hepburn-esque performance, a defining one. Finally, the audience senses, she’s been seen by someone, in a deeper, more knowing way than ever before. “Carol” traces the two women’s friendship that gradually, inescapably, develops into a passionate romance, bringing the audience along on a love affair born of instinct, affinity and the instantaneous connection that Rilke compared to “two solitudes,” touching and greeting each other.

But “Carol” takes place in the early 1950s, when love between two women still dared not speak its name. Haynes allows the gleaming surfaces, meaningful looks and subliminal cigarette smoking do the talking in a film that harks back to the work of his hero, Douglas Sirk, both in look and deceptively subversive tone. “Carol” is an almost perverse exercise in exquisite taste and masklike performance. But rather than evoke surfaces for their own sake, its lacquered 1950s perfection and Hopper-esque nightscapes underscore the protagonists’ struggle. While Carol battles her soon-to-be ex-husband Harge (perfectly played by Kyle Chandler) and Therese swims into consciousness against the tide of an eager boyfriend (Jake Lacy), their outer selves express all that goes unspoken, silenced by the conformist culture that engulfs them.

“Carol” is a performance of a performance, whereby codes and signals convey the most essential stuff of life, while the kabuki of being “normal” plays out with the carefully cultivated — and patently false — perfection of the toy train village Carol buys from Therese at their first meeting. Working from a carefully crafted script by Phyllis Nagy, Haynes portrays two people thirstily drinking each other in,

while on the outside, they sip tea and cocktails with prim decorum. (There’s a telling flaw on the fake-ermine brim of Therese’s cap, a scarlet smear that isn’t the letter A, exactly, but signifies nonetheless.)

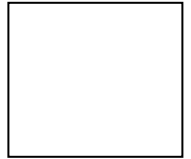


Teasing out the provocative, even subversive subtexts of “Carol” turns out to be an enormously pleasurable experience, thanks to Haynes’s unapologetic, if slightly mischievous, love for manicured melodrama, Blanchett and Mara’s finely tuned performances and Carter Burwell’s delicate, gently propulsive score, which carries the viewer alongside the younger woman as she’s swept into the gravitational pull of someone far more assured and experienced than she (at least at first). In one of the film’s most effective sequences, the two take a car ride from Manhattan to New Jersey, and it unfolds with almost dreamlike abstraction. This is what it’s like to fall in love, the movie seems to say, before you realize you’ve even tripped.



A longer journey ensues in “Carol,” one that involves the inevitable obstacles and pain. Playing out with episodic inevitability, the plot feels schematic and obvious until the viewer realizes how expertly Haynes has drawn the viewer into Therese and Carol’s feelings and desires. The film ends with a sequence that is simultaneously devastating and soaringly triumphant. It’s possible to watch “Carol” simply for its velvety beauty, but chances are that, by that stunning final moment, filmgoers will realize with a start that they care far more about the problems of these two people than they might have realized. “Carol” possesses the same quiet, catlike powers of its magnetic title character: It swirls around to ambush you — “I like the hat” — and make you swoon.

*Please join us for our thought provoking post screening discussions!*



Post Office Box 5266  
Wheaton, IL 60189

Phone: 630.534.4528  
Info@afterhoursfilmsociety.com  
www.afterhoursfilmsociety.com

### AFTER HOURS GOES GREEN!

Now you can receive the latest information about AHFS events in your email!

If interested, just send an email with your name and email address to:

info@afterhoursfilmsociety.com

and say, "Sign me up!"



---

---

# THE LOST LEONARDO

"Lively and engrossing. The tale of the most scrutinized painting of all time."  
*Film Threat*

Monday, November 8 at 7:30 pm

---

---

"A heartwarming tale about new beginnings."

*Tablet*

Monday, November 29 at 7:30 pm

# GOLDEN VOICES

---

---

# CAROL

"Director Todd Haynes transports us to a time we can only see in our dreams."

*Clayton David, Awards Circuit*

Monday, December 6 at 7:30 pm