

Quartet (12)

Reggie, Cissy and Wilf are among retired musicians living at Beecham House. Annually, on Verdi's birthday (10th October), all the residents perform to raise money for the upkeep of the facility. Cedric ("Ceedric"), played with wonderful abandon by Michael Gambon, is the director for the show and has issues about the level of performance required to raise enough donations to secure the home's future, especially as some of the previous stars have died or are too old to perform.

Reggie, Cissy and Wilf were the stars of an operatic quartet, recently re-released on CD. Reggie's ex flame Jean Horton (played by Maggie Smith) moves into the home, unbeknownst to Reggie. After initial frostiness, Reggie and Jean start to thaw towards each other.

Cedric has the idea to restage the operatic quartet. Attempts to persuade Jean, who retired from singing, are initially rebuffed. Only when learning that her old rival would sing Tosca as the finale if the quartet doesn't perform, does she agree to take part.

The cast and supporting cast, lots of whom were performers in their own right, were superb, with Sheridan Smith bringing class to the role of the senior doctor and home director.

Dustin Hoffman's direction in his directorial debut is simple and allows the cast to perform to their best.

The film is set in Autumn (Verdi's birthday) and is clearly an allegory for the age of the home's residents.

The message of "don't give up" and "live your life to the full" was appreciated by the 15 members who watched the film, as was the light humour shown throughout. Released in 2012/13, the film met with generally positive reviews, with the Rotten Tomatoes website summarising the critics view as "It's sweet, gentle and predictable to a fault, but Dustin Hoffman's affectionate direction and the talented casts' amiable charm make Quartet too difficult to resist."