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## Viva

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## Viva

### Abstract

This is a film review of *Viva* (2015) directed by Paddy Breathnach.

### Author Notes

William Blizek is the Founding Editor of the Journal of Religion and Film, and is Professor of Philosophy and Religion at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He is also the editor of the Continuum Companion to Religion and Film (2009).



*Viva*  
(2015)  
Directed by Paddy Breathnach

Last year the Sundance Film Festival brought us Rodrigo Garcia's *Last Days in the Desert*, the story of a father/son relationship using the most famous Father and Son duo as the focal point. This year's SFF brings us another father/son story, Paddy Breathnach's *Viva*. In both stories the son is named Jesus.

Set in Havana, Cuba, a young gay man (Jesus) wants to perform as a drag queen. He makes his living as a hairdresser who often takes care of the wigs of the drag queens at the club, but singing in the club is his passion. Jesus has taken the stage name of Viva.

One night, while performing, Jesus flirts with a man at the bar. Other performers urge him to flirt with the man because they think he has lots of money. Instead of accepting the flirtation, however, the man punches Jesus in the mouth. It turns out that the man is Jesus' father, Angel, a father that abandoned Jesus many years ago. Jesus, of course, did not recognize Angel.

Uninvited, Angel moves in with Jesus. He mooches off Jesus and constantly berates him. Most importantly, Angel forbids Jesus from performing at the club, even though this is the source of money for both of them. Angel thinks he is acting like a father, but he has not been Jesus' father for many years. We soon learn that Angel is dying. From this point forward, Jesus takes care of his dying father. At the same time he must defy his father's wishes about performing at the club.

One night Jesus is warned that his father is again in the audience. The owner warns Jesus not to leave the stage. He is not to go out into the audience. Jesus is singing beautifully and with great passion and instead of staying on the stage as he is told to do, he goes out into the audience and approaches his father. As his song comes to an end, Angel reaches out, tips Jesus' chin up, and says: "Viva."

This is a movie about the love of a son for his father and the love of a father for his son. How appropriate that the son is named Jesus.