



Press Release

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Retrospective to Yasujiro Ozu

The 53rd Berlin International Film Festival 2003 is dedicating a retrospective to the Japanese director Yasujiro Ozu marking the 100th anniversary of this great master's birthday. Ozu, who died in 1963, is one of the internationally most celebrated leaders of Japanese cinematography. His works have influenced many filmmakers, including Paul Schrader, Hou Hsiao Hsien and Wim Wenders.

In many of his films Ozu concerns himself with relationships within the family. Over the years he increasingly distilled his film language and replaced panned or moving shots with still takes. He insisted on using only a 50 mm lens on the camera which he always positioned at the eye-level of a person seated on the ground.

As a tribute the Berlinale has chosen nine of the old master's films which will be shown at a special screening in the Official Programme as well as in the *Forum*, *Panorama* and the *Retrospective*.

The opener at the Berlinale Palast will be one of Ozu's most famous works *Tokyo Monogatari (Tokyo Story)* which premiered in 1953. An elderly couple travels to Tokyo to visit their children who soon feel their lives are being disrupted. After this painful experience, the old parents embark on their return journey during which the mother collapses. The children hurry to her deathbed and divide up the possessions. Ozu concerned himself with the theme of 'one family, two worlds' as early as 1932 in *Umarete Wa Mita Keredo (I was Born, But...)*. Two adolescent boys rebel against their father when they see how humbly he acts towards his boss.

In *Ukigusa monogatari (A Story of Floating Weeds)* (1934), which Ozu re-filmed in 1959 under the title *Ukigusa (Floating Weeds)*, a travelling actor is surprised to learn that he has a son.

In *Banshun (Late Spring)* (1949) Ozu worked for the first time with his favourite actress Setsuko Hara who, in the film, wants to live with her father rather than marrying.

Ozu picked up this theme again in 1950 in *Bakushu (Early Summer)*. The family ties threaten to break as a result of the daughter's planned wedding.

In *Soshu (Early Spring)* Ozu returned to the figures of his pre-war films. A lowly white-collar worker, tired of his wife and his job, starts an affair with a colleague.

In 1958 Ozu made his first colour film *Higanbana (Equinox Flower)* which depicts the rebellious younger generation. A daughter gets engaged to the man of her choice against her father's will.

Ozu cast an ironic look at strict Japanese customs in 1959 with *Ohayô (Good Morning)*. Two boys beg to have a television. The father is prepared to fulfil their wish, on condition that they are finally quiet, but their silence causes a tumult in the whole village.

In 1960 Ozu filmed *Akibiyori (Late Autumn)*, a remake of *Late Spring*. A daughter rejects all proposals of marriage, as she wants to stay with her widowed mother.

After the Berlinale, the retrospective, which was launched in co-operation with the Japanese right-owner Shochiku Co. Ltd., the Japanese Embassy in Berlin and the Japanese Cultural Institute in Cologne, will be touring other international film

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festivals including Hong Kong and New York. Starting in February 2003, the Arsenal cinema in Berlin will be showing a comprehensive *retrospective* of Ozu's films.

Press Office
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