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THE JAPAN FOUNDATION MIDWEST FILM FESTIVAL

The Japan Foundation New York

Creighton University
and Film Streams

Festival Guide

THE JAPAN FOUNDATION MIDWEST FILM FESTIVAL

Guide to the Film Festival

A Non-Western Culture Activity underwritten by

Creighton University

in collaboration with

The Japan Foundation New York and Film Streams

Additional support provided by the Omaha Sister Cities Association

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Introduction

The recent popularity of Japanese cinema in the United States underscores the direct benefit to the Omaha community for whom this film festival will provide an unprecedented opportunity to view and discuss, in large screen 35mm format, award winning Japanese films.

This film festival, hosted by Film Streams every Monday night at 7PM from February 18 to March 17, is organized and distributed by the Japan Foundation of New York. All films are shown **ADMISSION FREE**.

The five films featured were selected by the Japan Foundation specifically to provide a view of contemporary Japan likely to be of interest to most Americans. The films explore themes of adolescent and young adult life in contemporary Japan; marriage and family life; ethnic relations between Japanese and Japan-born Koreans; and the status of women in Japanese society. A brief synopsis for each film is included in this guide to the festival.

The festival also features a co-curricular program designed to facilitate cultural understanding between Japan and the United States. Creighton University's Japan Studies faculty will lead post-screening discussions during which members of the Omaha community are encouraged to explore their thoughts and feelings about the films in dialog with a specialist in Japanese culture and society.

The festival will culminate with a lecture and post-screening discussion led by Noboru Tomonari, Director of East Asian Studies at Carleton College. A specialist in Japanese film and literature, Professor Tomonari will speak about the representation of Koreans in Japanese cinema. Professor Tomonari will also host the post-screening discussion of *All Under the Moon* on March 10.

Professor Tomonari's lecture and post-screening discussion are free and open to the general public. His lecture will be held in room 104 of the Skutt Student Center on the Creighton University campus at 4PM on March 10. A short reception will follow the lecture. Members of the audience are also invited to join Professor Tomonari's post-screening discussion at Film Streams to follow the 7PM screening of *All Under the Moon*.

The 2008 Japan Foundation Midwest Film Festival is made possible by the generous support of the Japan Foundation New York, Creighton University, and Film Streams. Additional support is provided by the Omaha Sister Cities Association. For additional information please go to the festival website at <http://filmfestival.creighton.edu>.

February

18

Water Boys

ウォーターボーイズ

Showtime 7:00PM

Location Film Streams, at the corner of N 14th St. and Webster St.

Color/ Vista/2001/35mm/91 min

Written and Directed by: YAGUCHI Shinobu

It's springtime in Japan and the Tadano High School swim team is barely keeping afloat. When a pretty new coach turns up with the nutty idea of creating a top synchronized swimming team of her own, she has just a few problems to overcome. First, she's teaching at an all-boys school; second, the five boys who have committed to the team are all hopelessly bad swimmers; third, she suddenly discovers she's eight months pregnant and due for maternity leave. Inspired by their coach's dream, the boys bumble through the spring and summer, preparing a routine for Tadano High's festival. They face great adversity: the derision of their fellow students, a swimming pool full of dead fish, the mounting pressures of college entrance exams, and, worst of all, their own dismal record of constant failure. Their only encouragement comes from a gaggle of local drag queens and the crazy owner of an aquarium, whose idea of training them is making them polish fish tanks round-the-clock. When autumn finally rolls around, the boys have not only miraculously perfected a truly unique routine, they've won the respect and participation of a whole crew of new teammates. On the eve of the festival, the performance is threatened by one last catastrophe. Will the Waterboys hard work be wasted, or can they paddle their way to the success and recognition they've worked so hard to win?

Pedagogical Value

This film explores themes of adolescent life, including social and academic pressures exerted on Japanese youth, and the status of women in the Japanese workforce. This film is recommended for ages 13 and older.

Post-Screening Discussion

Emiko Unno, Creighton University

Professor Unno is an Instructor of Japanese Language and Literature at Creighton University. She is a graduate of Sophia University in Tokyo, where she received her M.A. in Chinese History and Literature. Professor Unno started teaching in the Japanese language program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1979 and the Omaha Japanese School in 1986. She began teaching Japanese at Creighton in 1979. Professor Unno has also earned secondary teaching certificates from the State of Nebraska in Japanese language and World history.

Suggested Reading

The following readings are suggested for further investigation of the themes and issues explored in the films presented. All readings are available for download via the festival website at <http://filmfestival.creighton.edu>.

1. “Introduction” in Merry Isaacs White, Perfectly Japanese: Making Families in an Era of Upheaval, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002.
2. “Families in Postwar Japan: Democracy and Reconstruction” in Merry Isaacs White, Perfectly Japanese: Making Families in an Era of Upheaval, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002.
3. “Diversity and Unity in Education” in Yoshio Sugimoto, An Introduction to Japanese Society, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
4. “Gender Stratification and the Family System” in Yoshio Sugimoto, An Introduction to Japanese Society, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
5. William Kelly, “Finding a Place in Metropolitan Japan: Ideologies, and Everyday Life” in Andrew Gordon, ed., Postwar Japan as History, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993.

February

25

We Shall Overcome Someday

パッチギ

Showtime 7:00PM

Location Film Streams, at the corner of N 14th St. and Webster St.

Color / Vista / 2004 / 35mm / 119 min

Director: IZUTSU Kazuyuki

Based on the story by Matsuyama Takeshi, Lee Bong-Ou

The background of the film is the turmoil of the 1960s and the relationship between Japanese and Koreans in Japan. The story begins when members of the karate group of a Kyoto high school insult two girls from a Korean high school. A war breaks out when the Korean girls get the boys from their school, led by a boy named Lee Ang-son, to seek revenge. The Japanese boys are reprimanded by their teacher, and two boys, Kosuke and Norio, are told to go to the Korean high school and make a peace offering by suggesting that the two schools play a friendly soccer match. Kosuke and Norio are intimidated by the Korean boys but they deliver the invitation. While they are at the school, Kosuke hears the sound of a beautiful song and follows the music to the music room. In the music room, he sets eyes on a flutist who turns out to be Ang-son's little sister, Kyung-ja. Kosuke is a non-violent, peaceful, 2nd year high-school student who is part of a band. He finds himself drawn to the young girl and the sound of the Korean folk song, "Imjing River." He steps over the ethnic divide and becomes friendly with Ang-son and his rough-neck gang.

Pedagogical Value

This film explores themes of adolescent life, including social and academic pressures exerted on Japanese youth, on adolescent girls in particular, during the social and political turmoil of the 1960s. This film is recommended for ages 13 and older.

Post-Screening Discussion

Christopher Gerteis, Creighton University

Christopher Gerteis is Assistant Professor of History at Creighton University. His interest in Japan began as an undergraduate exchange student at Hamamatsu University in the rural prefecture of Shizuoka. Professor Gerteis pursued graduate studies in Japanese history at Meiji University in Tokyo and the University of Iowa, where he received his Ph.D. in 2001. He has published several articles on work, gender and ethnicity in 20th century Japan.

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1. “Modern Japan, Multiethnic Japan,” in John Lie’s Multiethnic Japan, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.
2. Erin Aeran Chung’s “The Korean Citizen in Japanese Civil Society” in Soo im Lee, Stephen Murpy Shigematsu, Harumi Befu eds., Japan’s Diversity Dilemmas, New York: IUniversity, Inc., 2006.
3. “Stranger than Tokyo: Space and Race in Postnational Japanese Cinema” in Jenny Kwok Wah Lau ed., Multiple Modernities: Cinema and Popular Media in Transcultural East Asia, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002.
4. William Kelly, “Finding a Place in Metropolitan Japan: Ideologies, and Everyday Life” in Andrew Gordon, ed., Postwar Japan as History, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993.

Hangin' Garden

空中庭園

Showtime 7:00PM

Location Film Streams, at the corner of N 14th St. and Webster St.

Color/Vista/2005/ 35mm/ 113 min/

Director: TOYODA Toshiaki

Based on the best-selling novel of the same name by Kakuta Mitsuyo

Eriko lives with her family in what used to be a thriving, modern suburban residential area, but which has now degenerated into something like a slum. Eriko has only one rule in her house – “no secrets in the family.” This strangely “open” family consists of the father, Takashi, daughter, Mana, and a son called Ko. In fact every single member of the family harbors some kind of secret. Both children regularly play truant from school and the father is having an affair. When his lover turns up as Ko’s home tutor all the skeletons threaten to come tumbling out of the closet, but the person with the biggest secret of all turns out to be Eriko herself. Her cheerful facade covers a dark and desperate past. When everyone’s secrets finally come out, the family faces its greatest danger, but this crisis will become the catalyst to renew their deepest bonds. Although Eriko ends up living on her own in another apartment, her family all come to visit her on her birthday.

Pedagogical Value

This film explores family life within the context of the social pressures exerted on Japan’s working-poor in urban Japan. The film is recommended for ages 13 and older.

Post-Screening Discussion

Christopher Gerteis, Creighton University

Christopher Gerteis is Assistant Professor of History at Creighton University. His interest in Japan began as an undergraduate exchange student at Hamamatsu University in the rural prefecture of Shizuoka. Professor Gerteis pursued graduate studies in Japanese history at Meiji University in Tokyo and the University of Iowa, where he received his Ph.D. in 2001. He has published several articles on work, gender and ethnicity in 20th century Japan.

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3. “Families in Postwar Japan: Democracy and Reconstruction” in Merry Isaacs White, Perfectly Japanese: Making Families in an Era of Upheaval, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002.
4. William Kelly, “Finding a Place in Metropolitan Japan: Ideologies, and Everyday Life” in Andrew Gordon, ed., Postwar Japan as History, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993.

All Under the Moon

月はどっちに出ている

Showtime 7:00PM

Location Film Streams, at the corner of N 14th St. and Webster St.

Color / vista/1993 /35mm/ 109 min

Director: SAI Yoichi

Based on the novel by: Yan Sogil

Kang Chung Nam, a North Korean born in Japan, works as a taxi driver at a Tokyo company owned by his old classmate, Kim Seil. He is surrounded by an odd-collection of fellow employees, including a new driver with no sense of direction, an ex-boxer Hoso who claims he hates Koreans except for Chung Nam, and an illegal immigrant from Iran. Chung Nam ignores these problems as well as the divisions between North and South in the Korean community to chase after women. Chung Nam keeps searching for a woman until he meets Connie, a Filipina who speaks Japanese with an Osaka accent and works as a hostess in his mother's bar. Connie, however, proves impervious to his advances until he half forces his way into her apartment and, tricking her, moves in. Life does not remain settled for the couple. At the taxi company, the Iranian mechanic is caught by the police for illegally driving a cab and Hoso, who always asked Chung Nam for money, is arrested by the Niigata police for running off with his divorced wife's kids. Chung Nam and the other drivers' salaries are also in trouble when Kim Seil invests his fortune, with the help of gangster loan sharks, in a golf course. With Connie and Yong Sung always at odds, Chung Nam hesitates at Connie's idea to move to the Philippines together, a reluctance that drives Connie to leave him and switch to another bar in far away Nagano.

Pedagogical Value

This film explores family life within the context of the social pressures exerted on Japan's working poor. The film is recommended for ages 13 and older.

Post-Screening Discussion

Noboru Tomonari, Carleton College

Noboru Tomonari teaches Japanese film and literature and is Director of East Asian Studies at Carleton College. Professor Tomonari received his B.A. from Sophia University in Tokyo, his M.A. from Monash University in Victoria, Australia, and his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. His research focuses on the representation of minorities in Japanese films, and he has published on the topics of *zainichi* (resident Koreans in Japan) and *burakumin* (Japan's hereditary underclass) in film and literature. He is currently working on a book examining the *zainichi* and other foreign nationals who are currently making films and documentaries in Japan.

Special Lecture

“Searching for the Moon: The Korean Filmmakers in Contemporary Japan”

Noboru Tomonari, Carleton College

March 10 at 4:00PM

Skutt Student Center, Room 104

Creighton University Campus

Suggested Reading

The following readings are suggested for further investigation of the themes and issues explored in the films presented. All readings are available for download via the festival website at <http://filmfestival.creighton.edu>.

1. Noboru Tomonari, “Configuring Bodies: Self-Identity in the works of Kaneshiro Kazuki and Yan Sogiro,” *Japanese Studies*, December 2005, 25:3, pp. 257-69.
2. “Modern Japan, Multiethnic Japan,” in John Lie’s *Multiethnic Japan*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.
3. Erin Aeran Chung's “The Korean Citizen in Japanese Civil Society” in Soo im Lee, Stephen Murpy Shigematsu, Harumi Befu eds., *Japan’s Diversity Dilemmas*, New York: IUniversity, Inc., 2006.
4. “Stranger than Tokyo: Space and Race in Postnational Japanese Cinema” in Jenny Kwok Wah Lau ed., *Multiple Modernities: Cinema and Popular Media in Transcultural East Asia*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002.

Linda Linda Linda

リンダ リンダ リンダ

Showtime 7:00PM

Location Film Streams, at the corner of N 14th St. and Webster St.

Color / Vista / 2005 / 35mm / 114min

Director: YAMASHITA Nobuhiro

This film about youth is set in a modern-day high school in a suburb just outside of Tokyo. In the days before the school's culture festival, a girl's music group is facing a dilemma. They planned on playing an original piece of music but...three days before the festival, the guitarist appears to have broken her finger and an argument breaks out between the vocalist and Kyoko. The band needs to find a new guitarist and vocalist. While the remaining three girls are pondering who to ask to be the new vocalist, they hear the song, "Linda Linda Linda" by the famous Japanese rock band Blue Hearts and decide they want to sing it instead of an original song. A Korean exchange student, Song, is sitting in the next room and they take the chance to ask her to be their vocalist. Her Japanese is not perfect, and she's never sung in front of an audience, but she just happens to be the one listening to the Blue Hearts song that inspired them to change their act. They practice and practice but the band doesn't seem to be improving. They are really tired, but a deep friendship develops among the four girls. The night before the festival, they practice late into the night and arrive at the school just as the festival is finishing and perform as the last act.

Pedagogical Value

This film explores themes of adolescent life, including social and academic pressures exerted on Japanese youth, and inter-ethnic conflict in contemporary schools. This film is recommended for ages 13 and older.

Post-Screening Discussion

Bruce Aronson, Creighton University

Bruce Aronson is an Associate Professor of Law at Creighton. He is a graduate of Boston University and Harvard Law School, and has extensive experience in Japan and the United States as an academic researcher and as a practicing lawyer. His main areas of research are comparative corporate governance and the legal profession. Prior to joining the Creighton faculty, Professor Aronson was a Fulbright Senior Researcher and Visiting Scholar at the University of Tokyo (2000-2002) and an Associate Research Scholar at Columbia Law School (2002-2004). His first experience in Japan, as part of a junior-year study abroad program in college, included living for a year with a host family which had a Korean and a Japanese parent.

Daphne Hyun-Jin Aronson, Kutak Rock LLP

Daphne Hyun-Jin Aronson is the Director of Diversity for the law firm Kutak Rock LLP, focusing on creating and fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace environment, including recruitment, retention and advancement of attorneys from diverse backgrounds. She received her Juris Doctor degree and LL.M. from New York University. She is a member of the Nebraska Minority and Justice Committee as appointed by the Nebraska Supreme Court. Born and raised in South Korea, she lived in Australia in the late 1970's with her family, and moved to New York in 1982 to continue her studies in classical piano. After law school, she practiced real estate, technology, commercial and corporate law, and was most recently the Director of Global Procurement Services Department at Lehman Brothers in New York.

Suggested Reading

1. “Modern Japan, Multiethnic Japan,” in John Lie’s Multiethnic Japan, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.
2. Erin Aeran Chung's “The Korean Citizen in Japanese Civil Society” in Soo im Lee, Stephen Murphy Shigematsu, Harumi Befu eds., Japan’s Diversity Dilemmas, New York: IUniversity, Inc., 2006.
3. Kathleen S. Uno “The Death of Good Wife, Wise Mother” in Andrew Gordon, ed., Postwar Japan as History, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993.
4. “Diversity and Unity in Education” in Yoshio Sugimoto, An Introduction to Japanese Society, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.