



JAPAN 2021: 100 YEARS OF JAPANESE CINEMA

She Was Like a Wild Chrysanthemum

This delicately sentimental account of a teenage romance by melodrama specialist Keisuke Kinoshita is one of the most touching of Japanese films. Narrated in flashback, it uses silent-film-style masking to create a nostalgic yet melancholy picture of late 19th-century Japan. Filmed among the stunning mountain landscapes of Nagano Prefecture, this story of 'pure love' is a true heartbreaker.

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In the list compiled by Japanese critics of the best films of 1955 *She Was Like a Wild Chrysanthemum* was placed third in a distinguished selection.

Perhaps it is the purity of the film's style which makes the first strong impression on us here in the West. The story of an old man's sentimental journey to the place where he found and lost his true love is told almost entirely in flashback, nostalgically framed in a misty oval screen. The emotional distance is also that of memory; never is the pace or the action forced into a more dynamic immediacy; the tone is one of reverie and sad recollection.

The concern of this exquisite artist is just as great for the subtleties of his scene as for the plight of his lovers. But in the scene Kinoshita always discerns the reflection of the melancholy circumstances. Time and again his camera dwells on the waving, submissive pampas grass inclining to the wind; whenever possible, twigs and patterns of leaves frame and soften the scene. The studied delicacy of each shot adds to the formal beauty and discourages any but the most tender and refined rapport with the action.

Such then is the art of Kinoshita. Far from the violence or the fascinated perceptions of Kurosawa, from the glowing compassion of Ozu and Gosho, or the mysterious and deeply passionate Mizoguchi, Kinoshita, on the evidence of *She Was Like a Wild Chrysanthemum* is the cinema's most delicate miniaturist; a talent of amazing refinement, and yet another revelation of the extraordinary richness of the cinema of Japan.

National Film Theatre programme notes

SHE WAS LIKE A WILD CHRYSANTHEMUM (NOGIKU NO GOTOKI KIMI NARIKI)

Director: Keisuke Kinoshita

Production Company: Shochiku Co. Ltd.

Producer: Kiyoshi Takamura

Screenplay: Keisuke Kinoshita

From a novel by: Sachio Ito

Director of Photography: Hiroyuki Kusada

Art Director: Kisaku Ito

Music: Chuji Kinoshita

Cast:

Shinji Tanaka (*Masao*)

Noriko Arita (*Tamiko*)

Haruko Sugimura (*Masao's mother*)

Kasuko Yamamoto (*Sada*)

Chishu Ryu (*Masao as an old man*)

Keiko Yukishiro

Kumeko Urabe

Takahiro Tamura

Toshiko Kobayashi

Japan 1955

92 mins

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