



ANIME

Maquia: When the Promised Flower Blooms

The vertical threads are the passing days. The horizontal ones are the lives of mankind. The people of lorph live far away from the lands of men, weaving the happenings of each day into fabric called Hibiol. They live for centuries, yet maintain the appearance they had in their late teens, and are known as 'The Clan of Partings' and treated as a living legend.

Maquia, an orphaned lorph girl, lives her life peacefully surrounded by friends, but somehow feels 'alone'. But the peaceful lives of the lorph are shattered in an instant when the Mezarte army, seeking the blood that grants them long life, invades on beasts called Renato. Amidst the despair and chaos, Leilia, the most beautiful of the lorph girls, is kidnapped by the Mezarte, and Krim, a young boy who Maquia secretly has feeling for, goes missing. Maquia manages to escape, but loses her friends and her home... As she wanders through a dark forest with an empty heart, she encounters a baby who is 'alone', after just having lost its parents. Ariel grows into a young boy. Even as time passes, Maquia retains the form of a young girl. The same seasons, but different flows of time. As the era changes, the bond between them changes too. This is a story of irreplaceable time, woven by two people who are alone.

Production notes, sayoasa.jp

For all the prevalence of young women protagonists in Japanese animation, female directors remain something of a rarity. Following Naoko Yamato's *A Silent Voice* (2016), *Maquia: When the Promised Flower Blooms* becomes just the second anime feature directed by a woman to receive a UK theatrical release. Working from her own original script, first-time director Mari Okada presents a heartfelt allegorical fantasy that posits motherhood as a supernatural gift, yet ultimately a lonely business. At the beginning of the tale, the eponymous heroine lives a carefree if cloistered existence as a member of the lorph clan, a mystical people famed for their longevity and the legendary magical cloth into which they weave their memories, emotionally connecting themselves to one another.

The plot unfolds over the course of a lifetime: not that of Maquia herself, but of the baby boy she discovers abandoned in a forest after she has been wrenched from her homeland by an aggressive and thoroughly masculine invasion. In accordance with lorph custom, Maquia's loving embrace of this outsider infant, whom she names Erial, sees her become one of 'The Clan of the Separated', raising the foundling as her own in the enemy city of Mezarte.

Maquia's entry into the world of motherhood happens without any intimation of sexual activity, in contrast to the trajectory of her childhood friend Leilia, who is abducted to serve as consort to the Mezarte tribe's Prince Hazel. When the child of their loveless consummation fails to manifest lorph powers, Leilia is forcibly separated from her offspring, and takes to tending instead the dragon-like creatures kept at the foot of castle, whose powers, harnessed for the purposes of warfare, have similarly waned in Mezarte captivity.

Okada's background as a prolific screenwriter with two decades' experience in the anime world comes across in this by-and-large tightly constructed chronicle of Maquia's relationship with her ward. If there is occasional confusion, it is due to the sheer timespan covered and the large number of peripheral figures popping in and out of the narrative. The animation – a first theatrical feature from the new P.A. Works studio – is generally impressive, if slightly generic. The character designs by Akihiko Yoshida, best known for his work on the *Final Fantasy* videogames, adhere to the anime standard of limpid blue eyes and paedomorphic features – though the script provides some justification for this, since the lorph characters' physical form becomes fixed once they reach adolescence. The locations and costumes are drawn from a Hanseatic-era Middle Europe, with the lorph homeland, rendered as a prelapsarian Rivendell-like utopia, providing a stark contrast to the industrial-military base of the Mezarte city, crammed with grinding cogs and Boschian jets of steam and flame.

Maquia is clearly aimed at a young to mid-teen demographic, but its underlying idea – that the maternal spirit is eternal and cyclical, unlike the transient physicality of men, and endures in people's memories right up until the point of death – results in some undeniably affecting moments.

Jasper Sharp, *Sight & Sound*, July 2018

**MAQUIA WHEN THE PROMISED FLOWER BLOOMS
(SAYONARA NO ASA NI YAKUSOKU NO HANA O KAZARÔ)**

Director: Mari Okada

©: Project Maquia

Produced by: Project Maquia

Production Company: Bandai Visual

Producers: Naoko Endo, Tomomi Kyôtani, Nobuhiro Takenaka, Nobuhiro Kikuchi

Chief Director [1st Assistant Director]: Toshiya Shinohara

Screenplay: Mari Okada

Director of Photography: Satoshi Namiki

Visual Effects Supervisor: Michiya Kato

CG Director: Tomohisa Shitara

Core Director: Tadashi Hiramatsu

Chief Animator Director: Yuriko Ishii

Main Animator: Toshiyuki Inoue

Animation Production: P.A. Works

P.A. Works (Animation Producer): Kenji Horikawa

Editor: Ayumu Takahashi

Art Director: Kazuki Higashiji

Character Design: Yuriko Ishii

Original Character Design: Akihiko Yosida

Concept Designer/Art Setting: Tomoaki Okada, Katsue Inoue

Music: Kenji Kawai

Music Producer: Terunari Yoshie

Sound Director: Kazuhiro Wakabayashi

Voice Cast

Manaka Iwami (*Maquia*)

Miyu Irino (*Erial*)

Yôko Hikasa (*Tita*)

Hiroaki Hirata (*Baro*)

Yoshimasa Hosoya (*Lang*)

Yuki Kaji (*Clear*)

Ai Kayano (*Leilia*)

Misaki Kuno (*Medmel*)

Rina Satô (*Mido*)

Miyuki Sawashiro (*Rashine*)

Tomokazu Sugita (*Isol*)

Japan 2018

115 mins

EMERGING FEMALE VOICES

Maquia: When the Promised Flower Blooms (Sayonara no Asa ni Yakusoku no Hana o Kazarō) Fri 8 Apr 18:00; Sat 23 Apr 17:45
A Silent Voice (Koe no Katachi) Mon 18 Apr 18:10 (+ intro by Dr Rayna Denison, Professor in Film and Digital Arts, University of Bristol)
Liz and the Blue Bird (Rizu to aoi tori)
Thu 21 Apr 18:15; Sat 30 Apr 17:45
The Anthem of the Heart (Kokoro ga Sakebitagatterunda)
Fri 22 Apr 18:10

STUDIO GHIBLI

Spirited Away (Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi)
Mon 28 Mar 20:35; Fri 29 Apr 18:00
When Marnie Was There (Omoide No Mani)
Tue 29 Mar 20:40
My Neighbour Totoro (Tonari no Totoro)
Tue 5 Apr 18:20; Fri 8 Apr 20:50

THE HISTORY OF ANIME

Early Days of Anime Shorts Programme 1917-1946
Tue 29 Mar 18:00; Mon 11 Apr 20:40
Momotaro's Divine Sea Warriors (Momotarō: Umi no Shinpei)
Wed 30 Mar 21:00; Wed 13 Apr 18:30
Astroboy
Fri 1 Apr 18:15; Sun 17 Apr 12:10
Kimba the White Lion (Jangaru Taitei)
Fri 1 Apr 20:45; Sat 9 Apr 12:40
Belladonna of Sadness (Kanashimi no Belladonna)
Mon 4 Apr 20:30 (+ intro by Helen McCarthy); Mon 18 Apr 15:30

ANIME CLASSICS PART 1

Steamboy (Suchimubōi)
Sat 9 Apr 20:20; Fri 15 Apr 20:30; Wed 20 Apr 18:10
Royal Space Force: The Wings of Honneamise (Ōritsu Uchūgun: Oneamisu no Tsubasa)
Tue 12 Apr 18:00; Sat 23 Apr 20:40
Patlabor: The Movie (Kidō keisatsu patorebā: Gekijō-ban)
Wed 13 Apr 20:40; Sun 17 Apr 18:20; Thu 28 Apr 18:15
Cowboy Bebop: The Movie (Cowboy Bebop: Tengoku no tobira)
Thu 14 Apr 20:45; Sat 16 Apr 20:30; Fri 22 Apr 20:40
Patlabor 2: The Movie (Kidō keisatsu patorebā: The Movie 2)
Fri 15 Apr 18:15; Thu 21 Apr 20:30; Thu 28 Apr 20:45
The Case of Hana & Alice (Hana to Arisu Satsujin Jiken)
Sat 16 Apr 18:35; Tue 26 Apr 20:55

ANIME AT THE IMAX

Ghost in the Shell (Kōkaku Kidōtai)
Mon 25 Apr 15:00, 21:00
Belle (Ryū to sobakasu no hime)
Thu 31 Mar 20:40 (NFT1); Mon 25 Apr 18:15

This season was co-programmed by writer and academic Hanako Miyata



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