



**KINUYO TANAKA: A LIFE IN FILM**

# Forever a Woman (Chibusa yo eien nare)

**SPOILER WARNING** The following notes give away some of the plot.

Inspired by the life of celebrated female poet Fumiko Nakajō, who met an untimely death aged 32 from breast cancer, Tanaka embarked on her first passion project as director. Working with female scriptwriter Sumie Tanaka (who also penned, *Girls of the Night*), the duo created a moving portrait of a mother and artist which simultaneously illuminated radical ideas of female agency and desire.

**bfi.org.uk**

Kinuyo Tanaka is best known as the magnetic lead actress in numerous films by Yasujiro Ozu, Kenji Mizoguchi, Mikio Naruse and others, where she tended to be cast as women suffering the constraints imposed by a suffocating patriarchy. Less well known is the fact that she directed six of her own films, at least one of which, *The Eternal Breasts*, is pretty special. Based on a real-life story, the film follows Fumiko, a mother of two dissatisfied with her lot, who discovers an outlet through poetry and divorces her unfaithful husband.

Diagnosed with breast cancer, she undergoes a mastectomy that seems to give her a new confidence and lease of life, at least for a while. There's an unsparing frankness and directness to the film, especially around female sexual desire, which feels exhilarating. Towards the end, as death encroaches, Tanaka unleashes some bleak, fiercely potent images that will haunt you for weeks after seeing the film.

**Kieron Corless, *Sight & Sound*, October 2015**

With a female director (Kinuyo Tanaka) and a female scriptwriter (Sumie Tanaka) adapting the biography of a female poet (Fumiko Nakajō) who died of breast cancer, *Forever a Woman* is the epitome of women's cinema. Despite the tragic story, the third film directed by Tanaka is a striking, well-crafted melodrama portraying the struggles of a middle-aged woman and mother facing divorce, illness and death. The film offers a daring depiction of female sexuality and desire as well as a powerful instance of women's creativity and self-expression on and off the screen. Yumeji Tsukioka's vivid performance in the leading role is a decisive part of the film's appeal.

**Alejandra Armendáriz-Hernández, bfi.org.uk 14 May 2020**

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**FOREVER A WOMAN (AKA THE ETERNAL BREASTS)  
(CHIBUSA YO EIEN NARE)**

Director: Kinuyo Tanaka

Production Company: Nikkatsu

Producer: Hideo Koi

Screenplay: Sumie Tanaka

Director of Photography: Kumenobu Fujioka

Lighting: Ko Fujibayashi

Production Designer: Kimihiko Nakamura

Music: Takanobu Saito

Sound Recording: Masakazu Kamiya

**Cast**

Yumeji Tsukioka (*Fumiko Nakajō*)

Ryoji Hayama (*Akira Otsuki*)

Junkichi Orimoto (*Shigeru Anzai*)

Hiroko Kawasaki (*Tatsuko*)

Shirō Osaki (*Yoshio*)

Toru Abe (*Yamagami*)

Masayuki Mori (*Mori*)

Japan 1955

110 mins

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## KINUYO TANAKA: A LIFE IN FILM

### Love Letter (Koibumi)

Mon 1 Aug 18:15; Sat 6 Aug 12:00; Sat 20 Aug 12:15; Fri 26 Aug 18:15

### Forever a Woman (aka The Eternal Breasts) (Chibusa yo eien nare)

Wed 3 Aug 20:45; Mon 8 Aug 20:40; Sun 21 Aug 14:45; Mon 29 Aug 14:30

### The Moon Has Risen (Tsuki wa noborinu)

Sun 7 Aug 15:40; Sat 20 Aug 18:00; Fri 26 Aug 20:40

### Kinuyo Tanaka: Film Pioneer

Mon 8 Aug 18:30

### The Wandering Princess (Ruten no ohi)

Sun 14 Aug 12:20; Sun 21 Aug 18:10; Sat 27 Aug 20:50

### Girls of the Night (Onna bakari no yoru)

Sun 14 Aug 18:10; Sat 27 Aug 16:00; Mon 29 Aug 18:20; Wed 31 Aug 20:30

### Love under the Crucifix (Ogin-sama)

Tue 16 Aug 20:45; Sun 28 Aug 18:20; Tue 30 Aug 20:45

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In September we will screen six films with Kinuyo Tanaka as actor, including *The Life of Oharu* and *A Hen in the Wind*

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