



RE-RELEASES

Tokyo Story (Tōkyō Monogatari)

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Director: Yasujiro Ozu

Production Company: Shochiku Co. Ltd.

Producer: Takeshi Yamamoto

Production Manager: Tomiji Shimizu

Assistant Directors: Yamamoto Kōzō,

Takahashi Osamu

Second Assistant Director: Shōhei Imamura *

Assistant Directors: Kozo Yamamoto,

Osamu Takahashi

Screenplay: Kogo Noda, Yasujiro Ozu

Director of Photography: Yuharu Atsuta

Assistant Cinematographer: Takashi Kawamata

Lighting Technician: Itsuo Takashita

Lighting Assistant: Takeshi Yakuwa

Editor: Yoshiyasu Hamamura

Art Director: Tatsuo Hamada

Set Designer: Toshio Takahashi

Set Decorator: Setsutarō Moriya

Costume Designer: Taizō Saitō

Music: Takanobu Saitō

Sound Engineer: Mitsuru Kaneko

Sound Assistant: Yoshiomi Hori

Sound Recording: Yoshisaburō Senō

Film Development: Ryūji Hayashi

Cast:

Chishū Ryū (*Shūkichi Hirayama*)

Chieko Higashiyama (*Tomi, Hirayama's wife*)

Setsuko Hara (*Noriko, Hirayama's daughter-in-law*)

Haruko Sugimura

(*Shige Kaneko, Hirayama's elder daughter*)

Sō Yamamura (*Kōichi, Hirayama's elder son*)

Kuniko Miyake (*Fumiko, Koichi's wife*)

Kyōko Kagawa

(*Kyōko, Hirayama's younger daughter*)

Eijirō Tono (*Sanpei Numata, Hirayama's friend*)

Nobuo Nakamura

(*Kurazo Kaneko, Shige's husband*)

Shirō Ōsaka (*Keizō Hirayama's younger son*)

Hisao Toake (*Osamu Hattori, Hirayama's friend*)

Teruko Nagaoka (*Yone Hattori*)

Mutsuko Sakura (*woman at oden counter*)

Toyo Takahashi (*Noriko's neighbour in Onomichi*)

Tōru Abe (*railway clerk*)

Sachiko Mitani (*woman at Noriko's apartment*)

Zen Murase (*Minoru, Koichi's elder son*)

Mitsuhiro Mori (*Isamu, Koichi's younger son*)

Junko Anan (*beauty salon assistant*)

Ryōko Mizuki, Yoshiko Togawa

(*beauty salon customers*)

Kazuhiro Itokawa (*tenant at the Hattori household*)

Fumio Toyama (*patient*)

Keijirō Morozumi (*police officer*)

Tsutomu Nijijima

(*company section chief at Noriko's office*)

Shōzō Suzuki (*clerk at Noriko's office*)

Yoshiko Tashiro, Haruko Chichibu (*maids at inn*)

Takashi Miki (*singer at inn*)

Toshinosuke Nagao (*doctor*)

Japan 1953

136 mins

Digital 4K (restoration)

* Uncredited

A BFI release

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

Yasujiro Ozu's celebrated masterpiece, ranked fourth in the 2022 *Sight and Sound* Greatest Films of All Time poll and beautifully restored for its 70th anniversary, exemplifies the filmmaker's minimalist style in its dissection of intergenerational relationships within one family.

Retired couple Shūkichi and Tomi Hirayama, who live with their youngest daughter Kyōko, decide to travel east to visit their eldest son and daughter in Tokyo. Both soon make it clear they are too busy to spend time with their parents, leaving daughter-in-law Noriko to show them around. It's through her kindness that Ozu explores this family's dynamic. In its contemplation of tradition and modernity, and its portrait of family as a microcosm of a changing society, Ozu's most acclaimed film is of a piece with the magnificent work he produced in his final decade. With it, he refined his style to a beguilingly simple degree, emphasising gesture over action, and with each moment building towards a quietly devastating denouement.

Ian Haydn Smith, Yasujiro Ozu and Kōji Fukada season curator

Ozu described *Tokyo Story* as his 'most melodramatic' movie, an observation taken by most western commentators, dazzled by the director's minimalist style and resolutely quotidian material, as ironic. But irony was never Ozu's preferred tone, and his comment surely reflected the film's uncharacteristic explicitness: this is an almost didactic film about the disintegration of Japanese family values, full of characters and incidents designed to spell out social and psychological points with diagrammatic clarity. In calling the film 'melodramatic', Ozu may also have had in the back of his mind the story's origin in co-writer Kogo Noda's memories of the 1936 Leo McCarey film *Make Way for Tomorrow*, which similarly contrasts the emotional stoicism of an elderly couple financially ruined in the Depression with the brash impatience of their urbanised children, but does so with a directness entirely normal in Hollywood movies.

Although it is not a precise match with any other Ozu film in theme, tone or structure, *Tokyo Story* obviously shares characteristics and concerns with many of them. Its interests in parent-offspring relations, in urban/rural contrasts, and in the evanescence of happiness are all entirely consonant with earlier films, from *The Only Son* (1936) through conservative wartime films like *Brothers and Sisters of the Toda Family* (1941) and *There Was a Father* (1942) to other films of the post-war 'reconstruction' like *Late Spring* (1949) and *Early Summer* (1951). It also uses most of Ozu's well-known visual tropes, from the use of low camera positions for domestic interiors to patterns of cutting based on visual analogies rather than conventional eyeline matches. What's different here is, again, the overall explicitness of the film's aim. The fact that this is a film in which the main characters frequently and directly discuss the issues that confront them (for example, parents' disappointment in their children's levels of assessment, or a young woman's disgust at her elder sister's uncaring meanness) militates against both the psychological nuancing and the structural playfulness that Ozu elsewhere used freely.

A FAMILY AFFAIR: THE FILMS OF YASUJIRO OZU

Tokyo Story (Tōkyō monogatari)

From Fri 1 Sep

I Flunked, But... (Rakudai wa shitakeredo)

Sat 2 Sep 16:15; Wed 13 Sep 20:35

Tokyo Chorus (Tōkyō no kōrasu)

Sat 2 Sep 18:30; Sun 17 Sep 16:00

An Autumn Evening with Yasujiro Ozu

Mon 4 Sep 18:15

I Was Born, But... (Umarete wa mita keredo)

Mon 4 Sep 20:30 (+ intro by Jinhee Choi, King's College London); Fri 15 Sep 18:30

Tokyo Twilight (Tōkyō boshoku)

Thu 7 Sep 18:00; Wed 27 Sep 20:15

The Only Son (Hitori musuko)

Fri 8 Sep 20:40; Sat 16 Sep 18:10 (+ intro by season curator Ian Haydn Smith)

A Story of Floating Weeds (Ukigusa monogatari)

Sat 9 Sep 11:50; Sat 23 Sep 16:00

Good Morning (Ohayō)

Sat 9 Sep 18:10; Sat 30 Sep 20:40

Floating Weeds (Ukigusa)

Sat 9 Sep 20:30; Sun 1 Oct 11:30 BFI IMAX;
Mon 2 Oct 18:00

Late Spring (Banshun)

Sun 10 Sep 12:15 (+ intro by season curator, Ian Haydn Smith); Fri 22 Sep 20:50

Early Summer (Bakushu)

Sun 10 Sep 15:00; Wed 13 Sep 14:30;
Sat 23 Sep 20:35

Brothers and Sisters of the Toda Family

(Todake no kyōdai)

Mon 11 Sep 18:00; Sat 30 Sep 18:20

There Was a Father (Chichi ariki)

Mon 11 Sep 20:40; Thu 28 Sep 18:20

City Lit at BFI: Ozu: Cinema of Everyday Life

Tue 12 Sep – 3 Oct 18:30-20:30

Record of a Tenement Gentleman

(Nagaya Shinshiroku)

Tue 12 Sep 20:30; Wed 20 Sep 21:00;
Sat 23 Sep 18:30

Early Spring (Sōshun)

Thu 14 Sep 20:10; Sun 1 Oct 18:00

The Flavour of Green Tea Over Rice

(Ochazuke no aji)

Fri 15 Sep 20:45; Sat 30 Sep 15:30

The Anatomy of Ozu

Sat 16 Sep 12:00-17:00

Late Autumn (Akibiyori)

Sun 17 Sep 18:20; Sat 30 Sep 12:30

Equinox Flower (Higanbana)

Thu 21 Sep 18:00; Sun 1 Oct 15:10

An Autumn Afternoon (Sanma no aji)

Sun 24 Sep 18:25 (+ intro); Tue 3 Oct 20:45

Influence and Inspiration

Make Way for Tomorrow

Sat 2 Sep 12:40; Sun 24 Sep 15:50 (+ intro by season curator Ian Haydn Smith)

Tokyo-Ga

Sun 3 Sep 14:00; Mon 2 Oct 20:45

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In part, the film's overt seriousness springs from its persistent undercurrent of social commentary. This is absolutely a film of its moment: it faithfully records everything from Tokyo's post-war rebuilding boom to the raucous and hedonistic behaviour of young people in a hot-spring hotel, the latter an early sign of the 'Sun Tribe' delinquency that was to become Japan's hottest social topic only three years later. (Since Ozu and Noda habitually retreated to hot-spring resorts themselves to work on their scripts, it's amusing to speculate that they themselves had experienced the same kind of sleepless night suffered by the Hirayama couple). Equally topical was the core theme of the chasm between traditionalist, rural parents and their city-based sons and daughters: the breakdown in age-old family support structures in the years of American occupation and 'democratisation' was a widely discussed topic in the early 1950s. And the financial plights of Koichi and Shige, one struggling to run a suburban medical practice, the other managing a tawdry hair salon, both in conspicuously unfashionable areas of the city, are observed with the same fastidious eye for social and economic demographics.

The characters are also somewhat less nuanced than in many other Ozu films, even when played by the directors' favourites from the Shochiku 'stock company' of contract actors. Haruko Sugimura's account of Shige, for example, is a nakedly explicit picture of the death of sentiment: the woman is a cypher for selfishness, opportunism and greed. Ozu allows himself one set-piece of comedy (in an otherwise generally sombre movie) at her expense: the scene in which she is embarrassed to have her drunken father and two equally comatose strangers dumped on her late at night by the police. The chief exceptions to this tendency towards caricature are Shūkichi, the emotionally repressed patriarch played by Chishū Ryū, and Noriko, the more than dutiful daughter-in-law played by Setsuko Hara, Japanese cinema's 'perennial virgin'. Shūkichi's feelings for his wife are expressed only silently, in worldless scenes after her death, while his only avenue for open discussion of his frustrations as a parent is while drinking with long-unseen buddies in a bar. Noriko, shown to be both a hyper-efficient 'office lady' and a model of selfless consideration, is given dialogue scenes (most notably with Kyōko and Shūkichi, in quick succession at the film's climax) to admit her inner doubts and insecurities, especially in relation to her fidelity or otherwise to her late husband. Both actors achieve the deepening of their characters with practised ease and supreme conviction.

Aside from Takanobu Saitō's lush but sparingly used Hollywood-style score, the film's soundtrack is dominated by three elements: chirping crickets, boats chugging and sounding their sirens, and train noises. The crickets evoke the rural ambience of Onomichi, while the other two sound elements evoke travel and the space between places – and by extension, people. But Ozu is far too subtle and humane an artist to reduce his sound design to a matter of schematic symbols. In a film concerned with constant journeying, it's significant that the only shot of anyone in the act of travelling is the image of Noriko on the train back to Tokyo in the end. In the shot, she pulls out Tomi's heirloom, the pocket watch, and examines it with deep emotion. The shot mysteriously clinches the association between the idea (or sound) of travel and the motif of evanescence. This may be the least 'melodramatic' moment in the film. It is also probably the most truly Ozu-esque.

Tony Rayns, *Sight & Sound*, February 1994