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Japan Society's Monthly Classics Series Returns with Akira Kurosawa's *Kagemusha*, Kobayashi's *Harakiri* and more!

This In-Person Showcase of Beloved Classics, Hidden Gems, and Recent Discoveries of Japanese Cinema Kicks Off January 21, 2022, with Monthly Screenings on Celluloid through April 1, 2022



Kagemusha © 1980 Toho Company, Ltd.

New York, January 12, 2022—Japan Society is pleased to announce the return of **Monthly Classics** on January 21, 2022, which will kick off with a 35mm screening of **Akira Kurosawa's**

lauded feudal epic, **Kagemusha**. A monthly showcase of beloved classics, hidden gems, and recent discoveries of Japanese cinema, the Monthly Classics' January–April lineup is composed of must-see spectacles, all on celluloid, to commemorate a long-awaited return to regular film screenings in Japan Society's auditorium.

Following *Kagemusha* in January, director **Masaki Kobayashi**'s subversive postwar *jidaigeki* **Harakiri**, a biting critique of authority also starring **Tatsuya Nakadai**, will screen on February 4, 2022. On March 4, Japan Society will screen a rare 35mm presentation of **Shunya Ito**'s feverish Toei cult classic **Female Prisoner Scorpion: Jailhouse 41**, an avant-garde-tinged exploitation film starring *Lady Snowblood* star **Meiko Kaji** in her career-defining role as the fierce convict Satori (Scorpion). Bookending the Monthly Classics slate, 25 years after winning the coveted Golden Lion at Venice, is **Takeshi Kitano**'s masterful and poignant crime drama **Hana-bi**, screening on April 1, 2022.

Tickets: \$15/\$12 students and seniors /\$5 Japan Society members.

Lineup and other details are subject to change. For complete information visit japansociety.org.

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SCREENING SCHEDULE

All films are in Japanese with English subtitles.

Kagemusha

Friday, January 21, 2022 at 7:00 PM

Dir. Akira Kurosawa, 1980, 160 min., 35mm. With Tatsuya Nakadai, Tsutomu Yamazaki, Kenichi Hagiwara.

A majestic chronicle of a petty thief surreptitiously given another chance at life to serve as a *kagemusha* (double) for an aging warlord, Kurosawa's late-period masterpiece erupts into a tragedy of Shakespearean proportions—relaying a fable of fealty, duty and power against a backdrop of feudal Japan. When the lord is mortally wounded, the *kagemusha* reluctantly impersonates the *daimyo* at the command of the clan's inner circle. Fated to play a part in a life not his own, the *kagemusha* must deceive even the warlord's closest kin, challenging his own commitment to the role even as the outbreak of war looms.

Harakiri

Friday, February 4, 2022 at 7:00 PM

Dir. Masaki Kobayashi, 1962, 134 min., 35mm. With Tatsuya Nakadai, Rentaro Mikuni, Akira Ishihama, Shima Iwashita.

60th Anniversary. In 18th-century Edo, a masterless samurai (Tatsuya Nakadai) wanders into the virtuous House of Iyi, asking to commit ritual *seppuku* (suicide). He is met with skepticism by the clan's retainers, who have learned of drifting *ronin* making similar requests as a means of extortion. Nevertheless, the samurai promises to disembowel himself, but not before imparting the tragic circumstances that have led him to this final act. Adorned by stunning chiaroscuro compositions, an unnerving Toru Takemitsu score, and a biting acerbic script by Kurosawa

scribe Shinobu Hashimoto, director Masaki Kobayashi's slow-burn rebuke of authority culminates in a scathing takedown of the *bushido* code and the shallow valor it vowed to uphold.

Female Prisoner Scorpion: Jailhouse 41

Friday, March 4, 2022 at 7:00 PM

Dir. Shunya Ito, 1972, 90 min., 35mm. With Meiko Kaji, Fumio Watanabe, Kayoko Shiraishi.

50th Anniversary. Best recognized outside of Japan for her role as the mesmerizing, katana-wielding Lady Snowblood, Meiko Kaji's equally definitive portrayal of the fearless convict Sasori (Scorpion) initially cemented her status as an icon of 70s exploitation. After a year in solitary confinement in a vicious women's prison, Sasori has taken on a mythic stature among the prisoners. Escaping with an uncouth band of inmates, she leads the group while the prison's sadistic guards follow in hot pursuit. The second film in Toei's *Female Prisoner Scorpion* series, Shunya Ito's fever dream sequel is recognized as the series' best entry, bolstered by avant-garde tinged visuals, delirious violence, a fuzzy guitar score and, of course, Meiko Kaji's fierce, steely-eyed performance of rage and vengeance.

Hana-bi

Friday, April 1, 2022 at 7:00 PM

Dir. Takeshi Kitano, 1997, 103 min., 35mm. With Takeshi Kitano, Kayoko Kishimoto, Ren Osugi, Susumu Terajima.

25th Anniversary. Crippled by tragedies at home and work, a depressed police detective (Takeshi Kitano) resolves to rectify his situation and the lives of those around him through illicit means. Told through elliptical editing and interspersed with flora-inspired canvases painted by Kitano himself, *Hana-bi* oscillates between tender moments and temperamental bouts of violence, delicately constructing an affecting and melancholic meditation on mortality. Following its Golden Lion win at Venice, *Hana-bi* served as Kitano's directorial breakthrough in Japan, cementing his position as a serious filmmaker after years of eluding critical stature and recognition at home.

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About Japan Society

Japan Society is the premier organization connecting Japanese arts, culture, business, and society with audiences in New York and around the world. At Japan Society, we are inspired by the Japanese concept of *kizuna* (絆)—forging deep connections to bind people together. We are committed to telling the story of Japan while strengthening connections within New York City

and building new bridges beyond. In over 100 years of work, we've inspired generations by establishing ourselves as pioneers in supporting international exchanges in arts and culture, business and policy, as well as education between Japan and the U.S. We strive to convene important conversations on topics that bind our two countries together, champion the next generation of innovative creators, promote mutual understanding, and serve as a trusted guide for people everywhere who seek to more fully appreciate the rich complexities and abundance of Japan. From our New York headquarters, a landmark building designed by architect Junzo Yoshimura that opened to the public in 1971, we look forward to the years ahead, which will be defined by our digital and ideational impact through the kizuna that we build. Our future can only be enhanced by learning from our peers and engaging with our audiences, both near and afar.

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