

Document Citation

Title	Late Ozu
Author(s)	
Source	<i>National Film Theatre (London, England)</i>
Date	1976 Jun
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	4
Subjects	Ozu, Yasujiro (1903-1963), Tokyo, Japan
Film Subjects	Banshun (Late spring), Ozu, Yasujiro, 1949 Munekata shimai (The Munekata sisters), Ozu, Yasujiro, 1950 Ohayo (Good morning), Ozu, Yasujiro, 1959 Ochazuke no aji (The flavor of green tea over rice), Ozu, Yasujiro, 1952 Soshun (Early spring), Ozu, Yasujiro, 1956 Tokyo boshuku (Tokyo twilight), Ozu, Yasujiro, 1957 Tokyo monogatari (Tokyo story), Ozu, Yasujiro, 1953 Ukigusa (Floating weeds), Ozu, Yasujiro, 1959 Akibiyori (Late autumn), Ozu, Yasujiro, 1960 Samma no aji (An autumn afternoon), Ozu, Yasujiro, 1962

Higanbana (Equinox flower), Ozu, Yasujiro, 1958

Seishun no yume ima izuko (Where now are the dreams of youth?),
Ozu, Yasujiro, 1932

Kohayagawa-ke no aki (The end of summer), Ozu, Yasujiro, 1961

LATE OZU

It is a matter of some pride when a National Film Theatre season's influence extends well beyond the South Bank; this was certainly so in the case of part one of our Yasujiro Ozu season which, apart from attracting a most loyal and regular NFT audience, has now been requested by a number of archives and individual Ozu scholars overseas. Even so, it is fitting that the most complete Ozu retrospective held anywhere should have been first presented on the South Bank, as it is due to the persistent pioneering work of the NFT (supported by numerous articles in *Sight and Sound*, including a famous piece by Lindsay Anderson in the late 1950s), that this director is now receiving the attention he always so richly deserved.

In this last group of films, we move away from the relatively small-scale comedies and little dramas of the '30s period and into the fully developed family chronicles (each containing a full roster of meticulously observed character studies) which first brought Ozu to international attention in the 1950s. Also, in the last few

films, we see his experiments with colour which, like sound, he also resisted for a while.

I hope the following notes will give a brief indication of the many riches waiting to be explored in these films and for those who, for various reasons, were not attracted to the first part, may I just reiterate that there is nothing basically exotic, or difficult, or alienating about these films. The main difference is that as Ozu and his collaborators put such a lot of thought, skill (and humour) into their work, a responsive audience will find that there is correspondingly more to extract and digest than in other directors' work. Each film builds up a little universe of its own in which life is savoured with a full realisation of its joys, pains and contradictions.—*John Gillett*. [The NFT would like to thank all those many companies and individuals who have helped to arrange this complete retrospective but especially the Japan Film Library Council and the Shochiku and Toho Film Companies.]



Sun 1 Aug 6.15. 8.30

Where Now are the Dreams of Youth?

This is really an "odd man out" in this season (but a welcome one), being a very recently discovered film from Ozu's early '30s period. Apparently, a kind of sequel to *I Was Born*, but . . . and actually made when shooting on that film had to be interrupted, it concerns three college graduates who have to ask a fourth, the son of a company president, for jobs. Followers of both parts of the season will welcome the presence of such Ozu stalwarts as Kinuyo Tanaka, Tatsuo Saito, Choko Iida and, of course, Chishu Ryu. *Japan 1932. 90 mins.*



Mon 2 Aug 6.15. 8.30

Late Spring

Here we see the beginning of Ozu's mature, post-war style in script (again with Kogo Noda), treatment and overall tone. A father feels he is keeping his daughter from marriage; when she is erroneously told that her father is thinking of re-marrying, she agrees to an offer. Richie called it "one of the most perfect, most complete, and most successful studies of character ever achieved in Japanese cinema". The farewell trip to Kyoto, in particular, must be numbered among Ozu's best sequences. *Japan 1949 / With Chishu Ryu, Setsuko Hara.*

Tue 3 Aug 6.15. 8.30

The Munekata Sisters

An unusual departure in that the film is adapted from a novel, which may explain why the characters seem slightly more distant, even "typed", than in the original Ozus. Also, it is a rare example of Ozu dealing with a form of romantic love, set within an examination of how two sisters' lives diverge and come together again. Lively, tomboyish playing from Hideko Takamine as the younger girl, a remarkable death scene set on a rainy night and a quiet, magical moment when father and daughter imitate bird calls. *Japan 1950.*



Wed 4 Aug 6.00. 8.30

Early Summer

"Six family members live together in Kamakura. At the end, the daughter agrees to marry and the family is dissolved". In this film, Ozu became less interested in a "story" as such and more in what he could achieve through observation, atmosphere and meticulous direction of the players' characteristics. As Richie comments, "it became increasingly possible to compress the story into a one-line description, though to do so gives no indication of the film's enormous emotional power". *Japan 1951/With Setsuko Hara, Ichiro Sugai, 135 mins.*



Thu 5 Aug 6.15. 8.30

The Flavour of Green Tea Over Rice

A middle-class couple experience a crisis in their marriage and try to do something about it. One of Ozu's funniest and sunniest films (with echoes of *What Did the Lady Forget?*), with classic set-pieces like the wives' clandestine gathering at the spa, the rebellious daughter resisting an arranged marriage and the magical coda with husband and wife coming together as they potter around the kitchen, after one of those typically wry Ozu rows revolving round the husband's favourite cigarette packet. *Japan 1952/With Shin Saburi, Michiyo Kogure.*



Fri 6 Aug 6.00. 8.30

Tokyo Story

One of the very highest points in Ozu's career and (until this season) his best-known film. Its investigation of the relations between parents and children has a vision, breadth and insight which makes a comparison with Chekhov entirely apposite. Ozu's fidelity to the implications of his theme makes this one of his most disturbing works, yet the radiance of its feelings and masterful realisation (note the use of sound) leave the audience both saddened and invigorated. *Japan 1953/With Chishu Ryu, Chieko Higashiyama, Setsuko Hara. 135 mins.*





Sun 8 Aug 5.50. 8.30

Early Spring

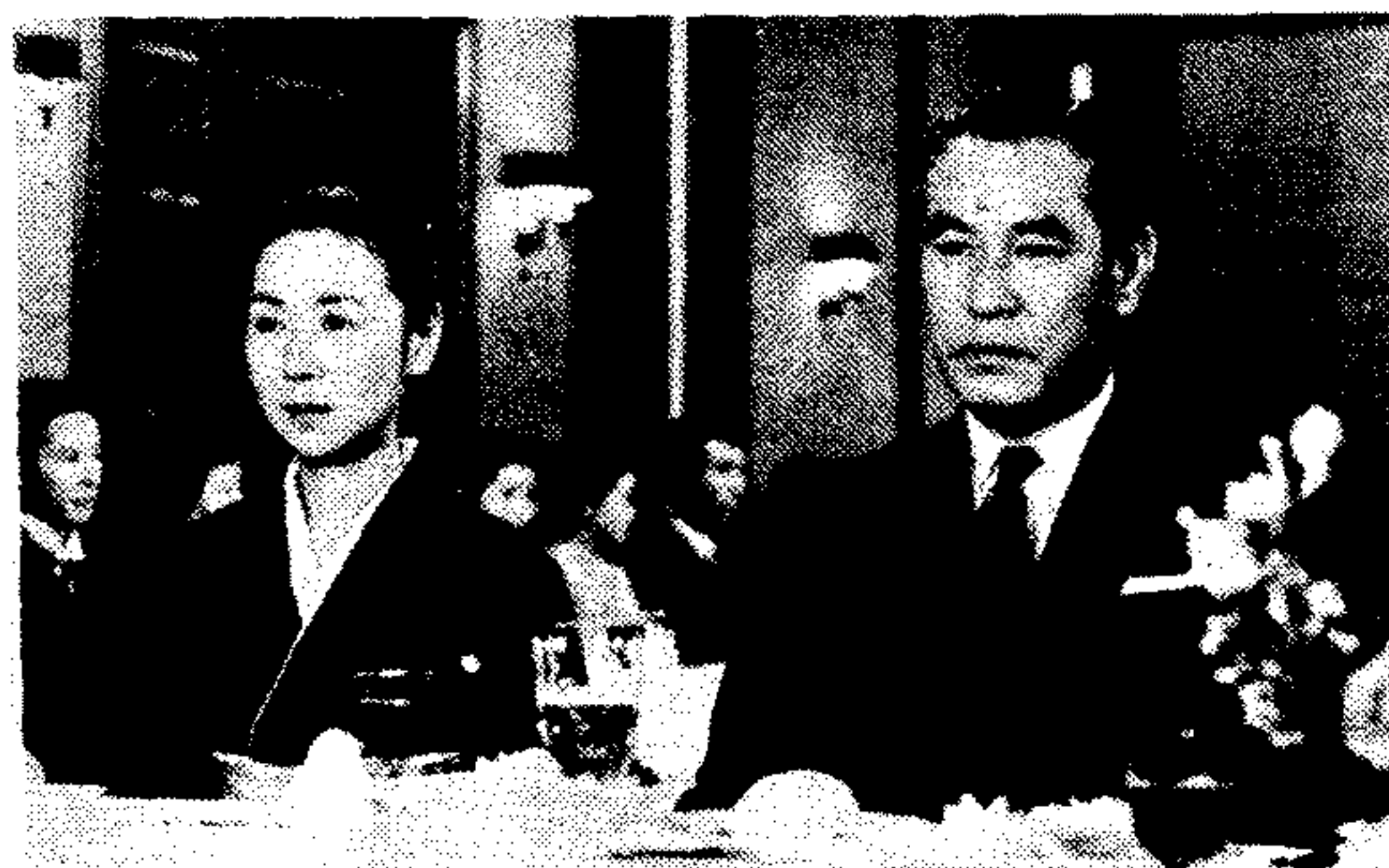
Mild adultery rears its head in this study of a rather bored office worker who has an affair with the office flirt and then tries to effect a reconciliation with his wife. Ozu says that his intention was to investigate the inner life of the "white collar worker" over a period of time; although a little discursive and repetitive, its best scenes have a quiet irony and mischievous humour plus a typically impressionistic Ozu opening – daybreak, getting up and going to work. *Japan 1956/With Ryo Ikebe, Chikage Awashima, Keiko Kishi. 144 mins.*



Mon 9 Aug 6.00. 8.35

Tokyo Twilight

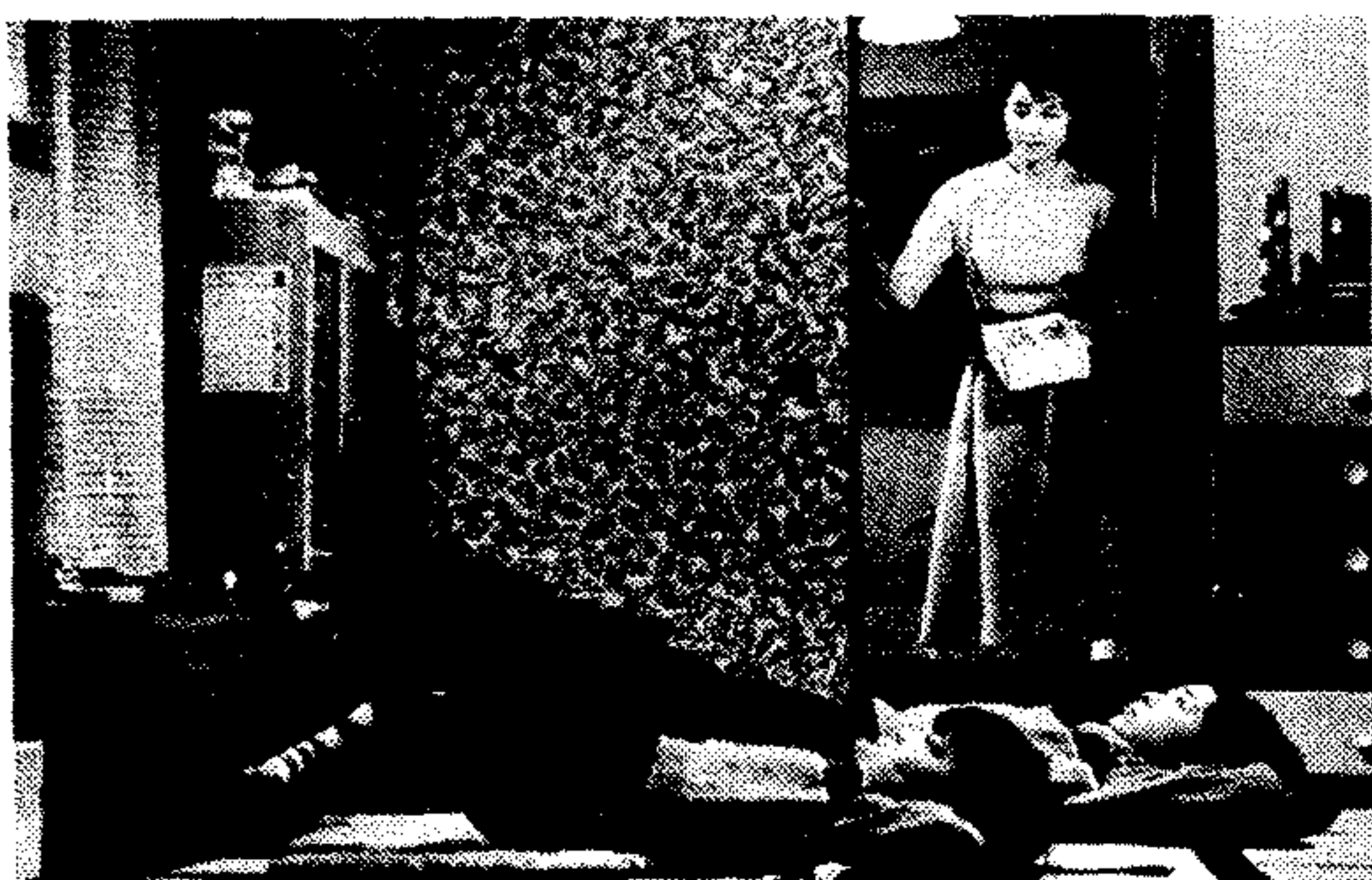
An unusually eventful melodrama (in that it includes a missing parent suddenly reappearing, dramatic confrontations and a suicide), it is also one of Ozu's most intense, even desperate, films. As Richie remarks, it benefits from some extraordinarily good dialogue by Ozu and Kogo Noda and a truly starry cast of players, including Setsuko Hara (who is strongly featured in this Late Ozu season) and Isuzu Yamada (the Lady Macbeth from Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*). *Japan 1957/With Chishu Ryu. 141 mins.*



Tue 10 Aug 6.15. 8.30

Equinox Flower

Ozu's first colour film, it shows how he was becoming more interested in the younger generation, or at least those members of it who were in rebellion. As Richie comments, "the traditional daughter in *Late Spring* is quite different from the modern girls in the later films . . . but this film is so far from taking sides that it is impossible to call the older or younger generation good or bad. It is a balanced picture of Japanese family life, made with loving irony". And beautifully played, too, by Shin Saburi and Kinuyo Tanaka. *Japan 1958. 118 mins*



Wed 11 Aug 6.15. 8.30

Good Morning!

Not so much a re-make of *I Was Born, but . . .*, rather a re-working of the theme of juvenile rebellion in a modern setting, where the father's refusal to buy a TV set is answered by an oath of silence from the sons. Again working in colour (which helps to characterise the many rooms of the closely set housing development), Ozu constructs a gentle, witty comedy of manners, without the density of the surrounding films perhaps, but very enjoyable nevertheless. *Japan 1959/With Chishu Ryu, Kuniko Miyake. 94 mins.*

Thu 12 Aug 6.15. 8.30

Floating Weeds

A fairly close re-make of the 1934 silent film about a group of travelling players whose leader visits his illegitimate son in a remote island town. The re-make gains enormously from the playing of Ganjiro Nakamura and Machiko Kyo and the stunning colour photography of the great Kazuo Miyagawa, here working with Ozu for the first and last time. Interesting, also, to note the small alterations made by Ozu in this version, strengthening the end and introducing a different flavour to the scenes of the troupe at work. *Japan 1959. 119 mins.*



Fri 13 Aug 6.00. 8.30

Late Autumn

This is a kind of re-working of *Late Spring* with the substitution of a mother for a father trying to marry off her offspring. In the earlier film, Setsuko Hara played the daughter, now she plays the mother. Other echoes abound: "the friends (seen again in *An Autumn Afternoon*) are Ozu's schoolboys grown old. They are still mischievous, even malicious, but still, in their way, innocent. There is an elegiac sadness here and, perhaps in consequence, some relaxation of the extraordinary objectivity that so distinguishes *Late Spring*". *Japan 1960.*



Mon 16 Aug 6.15. 8.30

The End of Summer

Like *The Toda Family*, this is a family chronicle taking in many strands, beginning in a light, bantering mood and ending with an uncompromising death. Through it all strides one of Ozu's greatest character creations – the tetchy old father with three daughters and a mistress – played by Ganjiro Nakamura with all the wiles and guiles of old age. The lovely wordless sequence when father and grandson play hide-and-seek as he tries to get away to the mistress is only one of many jewels. *Japan 1961 / With Setsuko Hara, Yoka Tsukasa. Agfacolor.*



Wed 18 Aug 6.30

An Autumn Afternoon

Ozu's last film and, in many ways, his testament – a beautiful, funny, wise, sad summing-up of everything that has gone before. Again, the situation concerns a widowed father who feels the need to see his daughter safely married. At the end, as the Ozu/Chishu Ryu father figure prepares to face the future alone, the empty rooms and the solitary person in the kitchen symbolise a great artist's farewell, equalled only in modern cinema by the closing scenes of Dreyer's *Gertrud*. *Japan 1962 / With Shima Iwashita. Agfacolor. 112 mins.*

