

Document Citation

Title	Yasujiro Ozu's last film: An autumn afternoon
Author(s)	
Source	<i>New Yorker Films</i>
Date	
Type	press kit
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	5
Subjects	Ozu, Yasujiro (1903-1963), Tokyo, Japan
Film Subjects	Samma no aji (An autumn afternoon), Ozu, Yasujiro, 1962

Yasujiro Ozu's

Last Film

An Autumn Afternoon
(1962)



A New Yorker Films Release

YASUJIRO OZU'S

AN AUTUMN AFTERNOON

(Samma No Aji)

A Shochiku Company Production

Produced by Shizuo Yamanouchi

Directed by
YASUJIRO OZU

Photographed by Yashun Atsuta

Edited by Yoshiyashu Hamamura

Script by
KOGO NODA and YASUJIRO OZU

Art Direction by Tatsuo Hamada

Sound by Yoshisaburo Senoo

Music by
Takanobu Saito

Leading Players:

Michiko Hirayama	SHIMA IWASHITA
Kazuo Hirayama	SHIN-ICHIRO MIKAMI
Koichi Hirayama	KEIJI SADA
Akiko Hirayama	MARIKO OKADA
Shuhei Hirayama	CHISHU RYU
Shuzo Kawai	NOBUO NAKAMURA
Mobuko Kawai	KUNIKO MIYAKE
Susumu Horie	RYUJI KITA
Sakuma	EIJIRO TOHNO
Miura	TERUO YOSHIDA

Japan, 1962-3

Agfacolor, 113 Minutes

AN AUTUMN AFTERNOON. Ozu's final film; winner of seven prizes for 1962, including the Kinema Jumbo. A father is enjoying life with his daughter and second son. The daughter now of marriageable age, has looked after the household since the death of her mother. One day the father and two of his old friends hold a party for their beloved teacher of their middle-school when the former learns that the teacher's daughter has passed the marriageable age. This leads him to reflect on his own daughter, but when he has a meeting arranged for her with a friend's son, she refuses. She fears her getting married would inconvenience her family. When she visits her elder brother, she is told of the marriage of his friend who had once admired her. Although appearing cheerful, her father and brother know of her unhappiness. Autumn advances and the day finally arrives when the daughter leaves home for her wedding. After the ceremony, the father feels a heavy loss as if all happiness has left him; drinking with his friends, his loneliness deepens with the long autumn night.

A NEW YORKER FILMS RELEASE

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YASUJIRO OZU, Director

Biography

Yasujiro Ozu was born in 1903. After entering Waseda University he quit because "it wasn't too interesting" and at the age of 20 joined Shochiku where, four years later, he directed his first film. "If you really want to know the truth, I didn't want to be a director as quickly as all that. A director has to spend his time working on continuity." Of his first picture he said: "When I saw it I didn't feel it was mine at all. And, though it was my first, I've only seen it that once."

During his thirty-six years in the industry Ozu produced fifty-four films. Among his favorites were THERE IS A FATHER, THE TODA BROTHERS, TOKYO STORY and EARLY SUMMER. One of Japan's most honored directors he was awarded the Purple Ribbon Award, and the Art Academy Award, the first member of the motion picture industry to be so honored.

Unmarried, he lived with his mother the simple life celebrated in his films. His closest friend was Kogo Noda, the scenarist with whom he worked from the beginning and who certainly is also greatly responsible for the peculiar excellence of the Ozu film. Of his personal life he once said: "I like big things -- like whales. I also like to collect brass. And I collect all sorts of patent medicines."

Of him critic Shimbi Iida has said: "...this man has succeeded in instilling some of the traditional Japanese spirit of art into the new field of motion pictures...This alone is sufficient to imprint the name of Yasujiro Ozu in our memories. The sight of him, huddled before a fireplace in a tiny mountain cabin with Kogo Noda as they thrash out the scenario between them gives one the feeling that one is indeed watching a true Japanese master at work."

Yasujiro Ozu died in 1963 on the evening of his sixtieth birthday.

DONALD RICHIE ON AN AUTUMN AFTERNOON

With AN AUTUMN AFTERNOON, Yasujiro Ozu completed his fifty-third and final film. It is the last panel in that great fresco which so completely captures Japan as it is -- a quality the Japanese themselves acknowledge in calling Ozu "the most Japanese of all Japanese directors."

This quality, so easy to discern, is difficult to describe. A precis tells nothing. Ozu's interest was almost entirely in character and, though the film may be structured, it is usually without plot, the director concerning himself almost entirely with a leisurely disclosure of character, the like of which is rare in the films of any director.

Just as he restricts his subject -- his pictures are usually about the Japanese family, about the elder and the younger generations -- so he restricts his means, creating a style as simple as it is rigorous. The camera is almost never moved, the viewpoint is usually the same, that of a person seated in traditional fashion on tatami, the attitude for watching, for listening. It is the attitude of the haiku-master -- with whom Ozu shares much -- who sits in silence and with an almost painful accuracy observes cause and effect, reaching essence through an extreme simplification. It puts the world at a distance. Ozu's camera is Leonardo's mirror in the Orient.

During the sixty-some years of his career Ozu evolved this most perfect, most tactful of styles. His world, its stillness, its nostalgia, its serenity, its beauty, is indeed very Japanese and it is because of this that his pictures are both so startling, so meaningful to the West -- which is just now learning that though limitations may limit, they may also enrich.

Ozu's last film, this is also his simplest. The ingredients are familiar, the colors are subdued, the viewing angle is invariable. The simplicity of the picture is the result of a style brought to perfection. Nothing is wanting, nothing is extraneous. At the same time there is an extraordinary intensification in the film -- it is autumn again, but now it is deep autumn. Winter was always near, but now it will be tomorrow. At the same time Ozu's regard was never kinder, never wiser. There is a mellowness about this picture which is stronger than nostalgia.

Perhaps one finds this so because it was the director's last film before his death. Or perhaps it was because Ozu knew he was going to die. During the making of this picture he had noticed that the glands in his throat were enlarged. He went to his doctor who sent him to a specialist. There he was told it was nothing, something to do with his age. He knew it was cancer, however, and he told his friends.

He died in November, 1963, and was buried at the temple of Engakuji in Kita-Kamakura, near where he had lived a good part of his adult life. On his tombstone there is a single character for mu, a metaphysical term, one which is usually translated as "nothingness," but which also suggests that nothing which, in Zen philosophy, is everything.

Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1970

FILMS OF YASUJIRO OZU
Available in this country

Ozu's first film came out in 1927 and through 1935 he never experimented with sound. Most of his silent films disappeared with the war, many of his sound films, especially the ones made during the war, were never released abroad.

In America, only eight of his films released. AN AUTUMN AFTER-NOON, his last film, is being released by New Yorker Films this season.

The available Ozu films are as follows:

I WAS BORN, BUT...	1932 (*)	
THE STORY OF FLOATING WEEDS	1934 (*)	silent
RECORD OF A TENEMENT GENTLEMAN	1947 (*)	
LATE SPRING	1949 (*)	
EARLY SUMMER	1951	
TOKYO STORY	1953 (*)	
FLAVOR OF GREEN TEA OVER RICE	1953 (*)	
EARLY SPRING	1956 (*)	
TOKYO TWILIGHT	1957	
EQUINOX FLOWER	1958 (*)	
FLOATING WEEDS	1959	
GOOD MORNING	1959	
LATE AUTUMN	1960 (*)	
END OF SUMMER	1961 (*)	
AN AUTUMN AFTERNOON	1962 (*)	

(*) From New Yorker Films