

## Document Citation

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## Film Programs



### The Long View: A Celebration of Widescreen

Friday, August 15, 2008

8:55 p.m. [Harakiri](#)  
Masaki Kobayashi (Japan, 1962)

(*Seppuku*). Masaki Kobayashi harnesses the breathtaking beauty of black-and-white, widescreen cinematography to create an abstract epic that, in its mastery of movement through architectural space, has as great an affinity with the films of French director Alain Resnais and the Canadian Michael Snow as with the Japanese period spectacle. Starring Tatsuya Nakadai, the

film depicts one man's desperate attempt to crack the blind, absolute authority that characterizes the feudal age and, Kobayashi suggests, our own. In an Edo-period mansion, the camera inches down hallways and finds rooms within rooms to explicate a complex flashback narration; when the film bursts suddenly into action, all of these walls, entrances, and no-exits come brilliantly into play once again. In the bloody climax, the black-robed figures who were caught and dissected by a stationary camera throughout the film come into their own as an inexorable prophecy, like Toru Takemitsu's haunting music and the words that emerge almost rhythmically from the dialogue: *harakiri* . . . (*seppuku*) . . .

—Judy Bloch

• Written by Shinobu Hashimoto, based on the novel by Yasuhiko Takiguchi. Photographed by Yoshio Miyajima. With Tatsuya Nakadai, Rentaro Mikuni, Shima Iwashita, Akira Ishihama. (135 mins, In Japanese with English subtitles, Color, 'Scope, 35mm, From Janus/Criterion Collection)

