

Document Citation

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| Title | Leading Japanese avant-garde poet, theatre & film director Shuji Terayama presents three film programs |
| Author(s) | |
| Source | <i>Pacific Film Archive</i> |
| Date | 1976 Mar 01 |
| Type | program note |
| Language | English |
| Pagination | |
| No. of Pages | 2 |
| Subjects | Terayama, Shuji (1935-1983), Aomori, Japan |
| Film Subjects | |

PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE
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Terayama, Shuji

March 1, 1976

LEADING JAPANESE AVANT-GARDE
POET, THEATRE & FILM DIRECTOR
SHUJI TERAYAMA PRESENTS THREE
FILM PROGRAMS.

March 30, 31 & April 1.

Japan's leading avant-garde playwright-poet-film-maker, Shuji Terayama, will present three film programs under Pacific Film Archive/University Art Museum sponsorship, on March 30, 31 and April 1, 1976.

On Tuesday, March 30, at 8PM in UC Berkeley's Wheeler Auditorium, Terayama will present his first feature length film, THROW AWAY YOUR BOOKS, LET'S GO INTO THE STREETS (1971, 120 mins, color, 35mm, English titles).

On Wednesday, March 31, at 8PM in UC Berkeley's Wheeler Auditorium, Terayama will present his short EMPEROR TOMATO KETCHUP (1971, 28 mins, English subtitles) & his most recent feature PASTORAL HIDE AND SEEK (1975, 102 mins, Color, 35mm, English titles).

On Thursday, April 1, at 9:30 PM in PFA's University Art Museum Theatre, Terayama will present a program of his experimental short films, including: WAR OF JAN-KEN-PON (1971, 16 mins); 16½ (CHOFUKU-Ki, 1974, 10 mins, color); HOSO-TAN (1975, 30 mins, color); LABYRINTH TALE (MEIKYU-TAN, 1975, 15 mins.); A YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE TO THE CINEMA (1974, 3 mins, color, three screen projection); and DER PROZESS (1975, 35 mins, color).

--The March 30 & 31 Wheeler Programs were scheduled too late to be included in our published March Calendar --

BIOGRAPHY

Shuji Terayama was born December 10, 1935, in the Northern part of Honshu, the main island of the Japanese archipelago. At nine, his father died in the war, and as his mother had gone off to work in an American Army base, he lived alone for awhile, until a distant relative who owned a motion picture theatre, took him into his home.

In high school, he founded several literary reviews in which he published haiku and tanka poems. At eighteen he went to Tokyo and entered Waseda University. In that same year (1954) he won the "New Poetry" Prize. However, it was not poetry which took him away from his studies, but illness: he spent three years in the hospital with nephritis, and it was there that he began to write plays for the student company he had created.

When he left the hospital, at 22, he struck out in many directions, as if to make up for lost time, producing poems, plays, texts for radio and pieces of criticism.

1960 The stage play CHI WA TATTAMAMA NEMURU (BLOOD SLEEPS STANDING UP)

1961 First boxing Criticism

1964 Collection of Poems DEN'EN NI SHISHU, which inspired the film PASTORAL HIDE AND SEEK.

1965 First Novel AA KOYA (AH WILDERNESS). Stage Play WOMAN OF THE DOG GOD.

1966 Radio Poem KOMETTO IKEYA. Television Drama THE ORIGIN OF LULLABIES.

In 1967, Terayama founded his laboratory-theatre TENJOSAJIKI ("Negro's Heaven" Troupe). together with the designer and decorator Tadanori Yokoo, and the theatre director Yutaka Higashi. Terayama's theatre troupe has performed in the world's leading theatre festivals and experimental theatre environments: Experimenta 3 (Frankfurt); Essen Municipal Theatre; La Mama (New York); World Theatre Festival (Nancy); Theatre Des Halles (Paris) Mickery Theatre (Amsterdam); BITEF (Belgrade); Spielstrasse (Munich); Festival of Young Theatre (Warsaw).

Among the TENJOSAJIKI group's most famous productions are: INUGAMI (THE DOG GOD); KEGAWA NO MARIE (LA MARIE VISION); JIDAI WA CIRCUS NO ZO NI NOTTE (THE AGE RIDES A CIRCUS ELEPHANT); JINRIKI HIKOKI SOLOMON (THE MAN POWERED PLANE SOLOMON); HASHIRE MELOS (RUN! MELOS); AHEN SENSO (OPIUM WAR); CHI NO KIGEN (THE ORIGIN OF BLOOD); and MOJIN SHOKAN (A NOTE BY BLIND-MAN).

In addition to his ten shorts and two features, Terayama's screen work includes the screenplays for Susumu Hani's INFERNO OF FIRST LOVE (1968) and Masahiro Shinoda's BURAIKAN (1970).

CRITICAL OPINIONS

"Terayama's first feature film THROWAWAY YOUR BOOKS, LET'S GO INTO THE STREETS had the same title as a play and a book of essays, both published in 1968; but none of the three works seems to have much resemblance to the others. The play was a 'stage verite', with poems by Japanese youth and rock music; the book 'challenged the possibilities of the book format' in a series of essays urging teenagers to leave home and espouse freedom.

"The film resembles the book to this extent. The young hero is a student flunk-out who breaks free of his pig-sty home by the railroad tracks, where a shop-lifting grandmother cooks his mute sister's pet rabbit, and his father, an out-of-work ex-officer, languishes malevolently. Clearly Terayama's appeal for young Japanese is his insistence upon the theme of revolt against the family structure....

"Yet particularly since the war, he feels, the role of the father has weakened. Terayama sees the loss of his own father as reflecting a larger Japanese feeling of deprivation. At the same time, he is fascinated both in a personal and a racial sense with the role of the mother --which to a large extent provides the theme of his latest film PASTORAL HIDE AND SEEK.

"This is a surrealist revisit to childhood. A 15-year old boy lives with his dreadful old mother in a crumbling house where the clock has broken and will not stop striking, even when they tie it up with a rope. The boy chats to his dead father with the help of a medium, nurtures a passion for the beautiful widow next door, gets himself spectacularly raped, and mingles with the people of a travelling circus..

"Halfway through the film he is visited by his own grownup self, the author and film-maker, whom he rebukes for distorting the past. The exploration then resumes, modified in the light of their debate. 'If we wish to free ourselves, wipe out the history of humanity inside us and the history of society outside us, we must begin by getting rid of our personal memories. But that is when our memory begins to play hide and seek with us..'

"This is Terayama's most immediately attractive and perhaps his best film. Alongside the rich comedy and truly surrealist vision (like the circus dwarf and strongman who compete for the erotic privilege of inflating the fat lady's rubber skin) there is a real and serious anxiety.

"Terayama's cinema shows the same breakneck evolution and experiment as his theatre work. His latest short films attempt to destroy conventional audience-screen relationships. In 16 \pm 1 the silhouettes of butterflies, hands and whole people interpose themselves between the spectator and the screen image. His newest experiment, still without a title, has a choral trio of tarts who heckle both the audience and the actors on the screen, while members of the audience are dragged into the picture for a little amiable humiliation and the spectators in their turn are encouraged to throw peanuts at the screen."

--David Robinson, reporting the 1975 Edinburgh Film Festival Terayama Retrospective, LONDON TIMES (August 25 1975).

"Shuji Terayama directs his first feature film (THROW AWAY YOUR BOOKS, LET'S GO INTO THE STREETS) at the age of 36, after a career in experimental theatre, poetry, screen-writing and documentary film-making. Utilizing all his past experience, Terayama literally catapults to immediate recognition in his directorial debut...

"In a fireworks display of technical variations that constantly pose a poor family's disintegration at a time when all society is trapped in its mad course towards affluence, the film opens with a young adolescent son's ambition to escape a social rut, establish his independence and live out life's adventures. In this process, he succeeds only in wallowing through disillusionment...

"The film is a virulent blast of outrage and revolt --heightened by apocalyptic colors and symbols --without overclouding the basic family characters of the boy, his sister, their father and grandmother...Taken as a whole, THROW AWAY YOUR BOOKS is a canvas of human tragedy and lower depth poverty, of rage and denunciation, of social fissures to be torn up and cleansed."

-- Hank Werba, VARIETY (October 9 , 1971) .

THROW AWAY YOUR BOOKS, LET'S GO INTO THE STREETS was awarded the Grand Prize at the 1971 San Remo (Italy) Film Festival.

PASTORAL HIDE AND SEEK was featured at the 1975 Cannes, Perth, Edinburgh , Chicago and London Film Festivals: it was also a featured entry at the 1976 Los Angeles FILMEX.