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THE JAPAN FILM CENTER PRESENTS

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Friday, October 1

✓ LATE SPRING (Banshun), 1949, black & white, 107 minutes
Screenplay: Yasujiro Ozu and Kogo Noda; Photography: Yuharu Atsuta;
Music: Senji Ito; Art Direction: Tatsuo Hamada.

Cast: Chishu Ryu (Prof. Somiya), Setsuko Hara (Noriko, his daughter), Yumeji Tsukioka (Aya), Haruko Sugimura (Aunt Masa), Hohi Aoki (Katsuyoshi), Jun Usami (Hattori), Kuniko Miyake (Akiko Miwa), Masao Mishima (Prof. Onodera), and Yoshiko Tsubouchi, Yoko Katsuragi, Ichiro Shimizu, Jun Tanizaki, Toyoko Takahashi.

The widowed Professor Somiya lives quietly in North Kamakura with his daughter Noriko. His sister Masa is concerned about Noriko's future: Noriko has passed prime marrying age, but now that she has recovered from a long illness (war related?) her prospects are still good. Especially, it seems, with Somiya's handsome and eminently eligible young assistant, Hattori, with whom Noriko spends alot of time. But Hattori, as it turns out, is already engaged to someone else, much to Aunt Masa's chagrin. But Noriko is blythely unconcerned; she is perfectly content to stay at home and take care of her father. After Somiya's friend Onodera comes for a visit from Kyoto with news that he has re-married, Aunt Masa concocts a plot to make Noriko at least consider marrying: she arranges for Somiya to meet Mrs. Miwa, a widow, and lets it be known that a match might be in the making. Noriko is horrified. She at last relents and agrees to a suitably arranged match. She and her father take a final trip to Kyoto together and while there visit Onodera. Noriko decides that re-marriage isn't such a bad thing after all. The bad feelings she has held toward her father since the rumors began are swept away as she realizes marriage may be best for both of them. They return home, she is married, and her father, never having intended to marry again, is left alone.

Of all his films, Late Spring was one of Ozu's special favorites. (The others he singled out were There Was a Father and Tokyo Story.) This may well have been because of the rapport he and his star, Setsuko Hara, shared with the film's protagonists. From the time of his father's death in 1934, Ozu had lived with his mother and had been very solicitous of her well-being. Setsuko Hara, phenomenally popular with postwar film audiences, became known as "The Eternal Virgin" both for the wholesome image she projected on screen and for the fact that, when she made Late Spring in 1949 at age 29, she was still unmarried. She has never married. She retired from films in 1962 (after appearing in Inagaki's Chushingura) and has made no public appearances since then. The precise reasons for her retirement have never been explained, but she is reported to have said that she never enjoyed acting and pursued her career only to provide for her parents. She lives alone in North Kamakura.