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THE JAPAN FILM CENTER PRESENTS

OZU & HARA

YASUJIRO OZU'S SIX FILMS STARRING THE INCOMPARABLE SETSUKO HARA
PLUS THREE MORE FILMS BY OR ABOUT OZU

FRIDAY EVENINGS AT 7:30 SEPTEMBER 26-NOVEMBER 21, 1986

JAPAN SOCIETY 333 EAST 47TH STREET NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10017

9/26 LATE SPRING (Banshun), 1949, b/w, 107 min.
With: Chishu Ryu, Setsuko Hara, Haruko Sugimura, Yumeji Tsukioka, Jun Usami

One of Ozu’s personal favorites. *Late Spring* reunited Ozu with scenarist Kogo Noda, with whom he had not collaborated since 1935, and with whom he was to write the great last thirteen films of his life. It was also his first film with Setsuko Hara.

Simple in plot but rich in the subtlety of its characterizations, *Late Spring* has been called “one of the most perfect, most complete, and most successful studies of character ever achieved in Japanese cinema.” A lonely widower tries to marry off his daughter. She prefers to continue her tranquil life with him, however, and reluctantly agrees to marry only when her father claims to be planning to remarry himself. At the end, the father, who had no intention of remarrying, is left alone.



From left to right, Setsuko Hara, Jun Usami and Chishu Ryu.

10/3 LATE AUTUMN (Akibiyori), 1960, color, 127 min.
With: Setsuko Hara, Yoko Tsukasa, Mariko Okada, Keiji Sada, Chishu Ryu, Shin Saburi

Ozu was fond of reworking earlier themes, and *Late Autumn* might be called a “remake” of *Late Spring*. In the earlier film Setsuko Hara had played the daughter; now she is cast as the parent. A widowed mother, worried that her daughter is sacrificing herself to remain at home, tries to find a husband for her. The daughter agrees to marry only when she hears that her mother is considering remarriage. The mother, content that her daughter is suitably wed, resumes her own lonely life.

Ozu wrote of this film: “People sometimes complicate the simplest things. Life, which seems complex, suddenly reveals itself as very simple—and I wanted to show that in this film. There was something else, too. It is easy to show drama on film; the actors laugh or cry, but that is only explanation. A director can really show what he wants without resorting to an appeal to the emotions. I want to make people feel without resorting to drama.”



From left to right, Yoko Tsukasa, Setsuko Hara, Ryuji Kita, Shin Saburi and Nobuo Nakamura.

10/10 TOKYO TWILIGHT (Tokyo Boshoku), 1957, b/w, 141 min.
With: Setsuko Hara, Ineko Arima, Chishu Ryu, Isuzu Yamada, Nobuo Nakamura, Haruko Sugimura

One of Ozu’s most melodramatic films, and one of his darkest. Two sisters live together with their father. The elder has left her husband to return home with her young child. The younger has an affair that ends in an abortion. The sisters are shocked to learn that their mother, who had abandoned them as children and whom they had long believed to be dead, is actually living nearby with another man. Shattered by this discovery, the younger sister kills herself, and the other returns sadly to her husband. The father is left alone.

Ozu wrote: “Many people think this film is about the wild behavior of the daughter, but I think the emphasis lies on the younger generation only as a foil for the older.”



Setsuko Hara (l.) and Ineko Arima (r.).

10/17 TOKYO STORY (Tokyo Monogatari), 1953, b/w, 139 min.
With: Chishu Ryu, Chieko Higashiyama, So Yamamura, Haruko Sugimura, Setsuko Hara, Kyoko Kagawa, Kuniko Miyake and Nobuo Nakamura

An enduring masterpiece of world cinema, and perhaps Ozu’s most compressed and best constructed film. An elderly couple journeys to Tokyo to visit their children. They are received coolly by all but a devoted daughter-in-law. On the way home, the old woman becomes ill and dies soon afterward. After the funeral, the children hurry back to their petty lives. The daughter-in-law remains behind to comfort the old man until he suggests that she remarry and build a new life for herself. Finally, he is left alone in an empty house.

Tokyo Story is distinguished by finely nuanced performances by each member of Ozu’s regular company of actors and by an unerring directorial touch in which not a single note is out of place. Donald Richie has written of this film: “Ozu’s style, now completely refined, utterly economical, creates a film that is un-



forgettable because it is so right, so true, and also because it demands so much from its audience....All elements combine to create a picture so Japanese and at the same time so personal, and hence so universal in its appeal, that it becomes a masterpiece.”

Chieko Higashiyama (l.) and Setsuko Hara (r.).

10/24 EARLY SUMMER (Bakushu), 1951, b/w, 135 min.
With: Setsuko Hara, Ichiro Sugai, Chishu Ryu, Chieko Higashiyama, Kuniko Miyake, Haruko Sugimura and Chikage Awashima

A superb cast of actors playing subtly characterized roles is this film’s chief attraction—not its plot. The loosely connected anecdotes that make up its story line illustrate how little interested Ozu was in narrative drama. “I wanted in this picture to show a life cycle,” he wrote. “I wanted to depict mutability. I was not interested in action for its own sake. And I’ve never worked so hard on a film in my life....I didn’t push the action at all, and the ending, in consequence, should leave the audience with a poignant aftertaste.”

Setsuko Hara plays a secretary for whom her family is trying to arrange a suitable marriage. Against their will, she chooses a widower with a young child who marries her and takes her to a new home far away from her family.



From left to right, Setsuko Hara, Kuninori Kodo, Zen Murase and Isao Shiroshawa.

10/31 THE END OF SUMMER (Kohayagawa-ke no Aki), 1961, color, 103 min.
With: Ganjiro Nakamura, Setsuko Hara, Yoko Tsukasa, Michiyo Aratama, Keiju Kobayashi, Chishu Ryu, Haruko Sugimura, Hisaya Morishige and Reiko Dan

An all-star cast revels in some of Ozu’s finest characterizations. Produced by Toho, the film has a lush quality atypical of his usual Shochiku films. A comedy, full of humorous and light-hearted touches, it is also one of Ozu’s bleakest films.

An elderly widower, head of a saké-brewing household near Osaka, abruptly takes up again with a former mistress. His willful behavior throws his family into turmoil, particularly when he introduces a flamboyant young woman to his family as the daughter from his secret love match. In the midst of family bickering and mounting business pressures, the old man suddenly dies, leaving his survivors with a deepened appreciation of life and death.



From left to right, Yoko Tsukasa, two children, Ganjiro Nakamura, Keiju Kobayashi, Setsuko Hara and Michiyo Aratama.

11/7 THE ONLY SON (Hitori Musuko), 1936, b/w, 87 min.
With: Choko Iida, Shin’ichi Himori, Yoshiko Tsubouchi, Masao Hayama and Chishu Ryu

Ozu’s first “talkie” film, and his careful use of the sounds of a modest Tokyo household reinforces the vivid image of everyday life. At first resisting recorded dialogue as an unnecessary intrusion upon the acting style of silent films, Ozu eventually agreed to do “talkies” only when he felt that he and his assistants had mastered the technique of making them. Decades later, recalling his work on *The Only Son*, he wrote: “...because I couldn’t shuck off the style of silent movies, I got upset....But now I realize that clinging to the ways of the old silent film really helped me with what I’m doing now.”

A mother works hard in order to raise a son and send him to university. Later, she spends all her savings to visit him in Tokyo. There she finds him married but penniless and disillusioned with life and with himself. He borrows money to entertain her, so that she can return home proud of him.



Yoshiko Tsubouchi (l.) and Shin’ichi Himori (r.).

11/14 AN INN AT TOKYO (Tokyo no Yado), 1935, b/w, 82 min.
With: Takeshi Sakamoto, Tokkankozo, Yoshiko Okada, Choko Iida, Takayuki Suematsu and Kazuo Kojima

Set against the background of the Great Depression, this film depicts the struggles of Kihachi, an unemployed father looking for work. Accompanied by his two young sons, he wanders endlessly through a desolate industrial landscape of idle factories and stark smokestacks. They take up with an attractive widow and her small daughter., and in his attempts to help them survive Kihachi begins to find meaning to his life.

An example of Ozu’s “Kihachi” series of films in which proletarian fathers struggle against adverse circumstances to create a meaningful life and a worthy example for their children. The last of Ozu’s extant films without recorded dialogue, *An Inn at Tokyo* uses sound only for music and effects; it has been called by Noel Burch the masterpiece of Ozu’s silent period.



Takeshi Sakamoto (l.) and Yoshiko Okada (r.).

11/21 I LIVED, BUT. . . (Ikite wa Mita Keredo), 1983, color & b/w, 118 min.
Written and directed by: Kazuo Inoue Photography by: Yuharu Atsuta and Kitaro Kanematsu

A remarkable film biography of Yasujiro Ozu, made by Shochiku to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Shochiku/Ofuna studio, where the director made his best-known films over a period of twenty-five years. This film was written and directed by Kazuo Inoue, who worked as an assistant to Ozu and began directing films at Shochiku in 1956 under the master’s tutelage.

In addition to selecting sequences from nearly two dozen of Ozu’s films, Inoue also interviewed noted fellow directors, critics, and biographers, and filmed affectionate reminiscences of the great director by many actors, actresses, and colleagues who worked closely with Ozu as members of his “stock company.” Among them: actors Chishu Ryu, Haruko Sugimura, Yoko Tsukasa, Nobuo Nakamura, Kyoko Kishida, and Shima Iwashita; directors Shohei Imamura,



Keisuke Kinoshita, Kaneto Shindo, and Yoji Yamada; and Ozu’s beloved cameraman Yuharu Atsuta.

Ozu (l.) shooting from his customary low camera angle.

All films are in Japanese with English subtitles.
All programs begin at 7:30 p.m. Programs subject to change without notice.

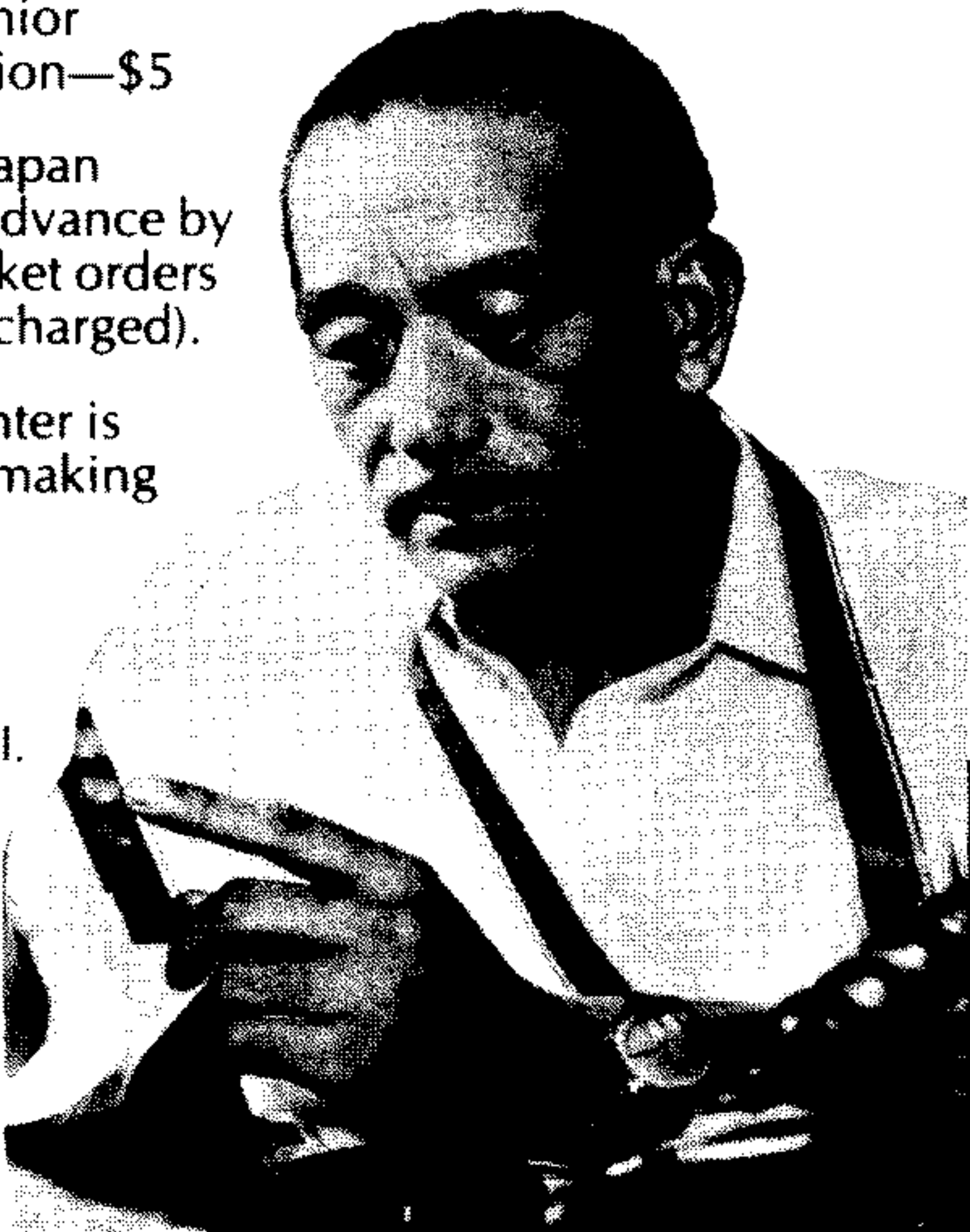
Admission: Japan Society members, senior citizens, students—\$4; General admission—\$5

Information: 752-3015 9:30 to 5 pm. Japan Society members may order tickets in advance by telephone and charge their advance ticket orders to credit cards (a \$1 service fee will be charged).

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Introduction by Peter Grilli.
Program Notes by Kyoko Hirano.
Program design by Meg Crane, Ponzi & Weill.
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Cover photos: Ozu on the set of *What Did the Lady Forget?* and Setsuko Hara in *Tokyo Twilight*.



Between 1949 and 1961, director Yasujiro Ozu and actress Setsuko Hara made six films together. It was a collaboration ordained by the gods: both artists were at the height of their creative powers, and their work together resulted in several of the finest masterpieces of Japanese cinema. After 1961, Ozu was to make only one more film before his death two years later, on the eve of his sixtieth birthday. And after *The End of Summer*, their last film together, Setsuko Hara was to appear in only two more films for other directors before retiring from the screen in 1962. Since then, she has lived in solitude in a suburb of Tokyo, shunning all public appearances, and earning for herself the sobriquet "the Japanese Garbo."

The comparison with Garbo goes deeper than the similarity of their withdrawal from celebrity. Both had been numbered among the greatest stars of their respective film worlds and both had brought to the screen a special quality of feminine radiance unmatched before or since. Like Garbo's stellar reputation in the West, Hara's in Japan has taken on an almost mythic saintliness. In films for Kurosawa (*No Regret for Our Youth*, *The Idiot*) Yoshimura (*A Ball at the Anjo House*), Imai (*Blue Mountains*), and Naruse (*Repast*), she had burnished her image as the ideal Japanese woman, enduring suffering and deprivation without complaint, and triumphing through dedication and selflessness. But it was in the late films of Ozu that her spirit shines most brightly. In film after film by this great master, Hara's face glows with an inner luminosity that, despite worlds crumbling around her, spells the enduring strength and beauty of the Japanese woman.

In Setsuko Hara's six films for Ozu, her roles changed slightly—in *Late Spring* (1949) she plays a devoted daughter reluctant to marry and leave her father to a lonely old age; in *Late Autumn* (1960), she is a mother, urging her own daughter to marry and

leave her behind—but in their central core of selfless integrity they remain much the same. And yet, each is etched with gentle nuances by director and star, and each lingers with a warm afterglow in the memories of viewers.

In addition to the six films starring Setsuko Hara, the present series offers three more works by or about Yasujiro Ozu. *An Inn at Tokyo* and *The Only Son* are two of his best films of the 1930's, the former his last extant silent film and *The Only Son* his first "talkie." During that era, Ozu was the last of Japan's major directors to abandon silent films for what he considered the artificiality of the contemporary "talkie." Always the minimalist, paring away from his plots and from his camera style anything that hinted at artifice or gimmickry, he resisted sound as an unnecessary intrusion upon film acting. According to Donald Richie, when Ozu was finally persuaded to attempt recording dialogue, "he found that the sound equipment was not a great impediment. Typically, he wanted to use sound to further restrict rather than amplify his style. He particularly liked the idea of the stationary microphone; it forced his actors to move about less, and he could get at them better."

The final film in this series, *I Lived, But...* is a unique new film biography of Ozu, produced in 1985 by Shochiku, the studio for which he directed all but three of his fifty-four films. In celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Shochiku studios at Ofuna, where Ozu worked from 1937 until the end of his life, the company gathered together many of his favorite actors, actresses, cameramen, art directors, scenarists, and technical assistants. To their reminiscences on film are added interviews with many of Ozu's most devoted admirers and biographers as well as clips from nearly two dozen of his films. Taking its name from Ozu's mirthful titles for three early films (*I Was Born, But...*, *I Was Graduated, But...*, *I Flunked, But...*), this film is an extraordinary homage to one of Japan's most beloved directors. For Ozu's ever increasing numbers of American admirers, it is a film not to be missed.

“... One brings oneself to an Ozu film and one returns richly rewarded. What remains after seeing an Ozu film is the feeling that, if only for an hour or two, you have seen the goodness of everyday people; you have had experiences indescribable because only cinema and not words can describe them; you have seen a few, small, memorable, unforgettable actions, beautiful because sincere, and saddening too because you will see them no more, they are already gone.”

—Donald Richie

“... the most haunting filmmaker I know. With almost unnoticeable pinpricks, he insinuates himself ever deeper into our consciousness, touching us a little here, amusing us a little there, making us face up to ourselves everywhere.”

—John Simon

“... the truest point about Ozu is that by being ‘most Japanese’ he has become universal ... you are convinced you have been in the presence of someone who knew you very well. ... And by holding to truth more than naturalism, he gives us a process of mutual discovery, the characters’ and ours.”

—Stanley Kauffmann

“Hara was one of the biggest stars in Japanese cinema from the 1930’s through the 1950’s. She was widely popular for her portrayal of the best of middle-class morality and manners. On the other hand, she lacked coquetry, but still many young men admired her for her pure and spiritual beauty. It was through Ozu’s films that Hara changed from a beautiful star to an excellent actress of ability and quality.

Until then, Hara had been frequently referred to as a ‘ham’ actress. Ozu defended Hara, saying that ‘Every Japanese actor can play the role of a soldier and every Japanese actress can play the role of a prostitute to some extent. However, it is rare to find an actress who can play the role of a daughter from a good family.’

In his films, Ozu directed Hara to portray this image. Her characters in his films represent a kind of ideal image of a well-bred daughter who is quiet, smiling and thoughtful. Although she looks obedient, she shows real strength in her decisions and principles. Hara established her acting style through such roles.”

—Tadao Sato



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