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THE JAPAN FILM CENTER PRESENTS

OZU

JAPAN SOCIETY 333 EAST 47TH STREET NEW YORK CITY



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PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE
University Art Museum

WHAT DID THE LADY FORGET? (Shukujo wa nani o wasureta ka), 1937, sound, 73 minutes

Screenplay: Yasujiro Ozu and Akira Fushimi. Photography: Hideo Shigehara.
Art Direction: Tatsuo Hamada. Music: Senji Ito.

Cast: Tatsuo Saito (Prof. Komiya), Sumiko Kurishima (Tokio, his wife), Michiko Kuwano (Setsuko, his niece), Shuji Sano (Okada, Komiya's assistant), Takeshi Sakamoto (Sugiyama, Komiya's friend), Choko Iida (Chiyo, Sugiyama's wife), Mitsuko Yoshikawa (Mitsuko, the widow), Masao Hayama (Mitsuko's son, Fujio), Tokkankozo (Tomio, his friend), Ken Uehara (Uehara, the movie star).

A splendid comedy on the foibles of Tokyo's bourgeoisie, foreshadowing the predominant themes of Ozu's late films.

Komiya, a professor of medicine, has taken up golf at the insistence of his very pushy wife, who wants him out of the house so she can hold court with several of her gossiping suburban friends. His niece Setsuko, a very sassy young lady who (tsk tsk) smokes, comes for a visit from Osaka. She falls for Komiya's young assistant, Okada, whom Mrs. Komiya has conscripted to tutor her cronies' children. Setsuko also discovers that when the professor goes off with his golf clubs it is not always to play golf: he stashes them at Okada's apartment and goes to a bar on the Ginza to besport himself otherwise. She follows him there one Saturday after he has purportedly left with a friend for a weekend away from Tokyo. She then has him take her to another of his haunts and coaxes him to call out all the geisha, and by the end of the evening he sends her home very drunk. A row ensues when Komiya returns from his "golfing weekend", for he is unable to intercept a postcard he had sent his wife saying what fine weather for golf it was, when actually the weather had turned quite nasty. Poor Komiya finds himself caught right in the middle of a spat between the independent Setsuko and his proprietary wife. Setsuko finally returns to Osaka and his band and wife are reconciled.

Up to now Ozu's main subject had been the parts of Tokyo occupied by laborers and lower level white-collar workers, but here he focussed on a posh residential area of the city, Kojimachi, and lightly satirized its citizens. Ozu at this time had himself just moved from Fukagawa, an old area in the heart of Tokyo, to Takanawa, one of its more affluent suburbs. He claimed this had nothing to do with the picture he made. In any event, from this film onward monied suburbanites became his primary subject.

Another reason for the change was Ozu's wholehearted (at last) conversion to the virtues of talkies. He saw an opportunity here to capture the flavor of suburban housewife chatter and put it to comic use. For contrast, he brought in the character Setsuko, with her thick Osaka accent and the brash manners of a spoiled merchant's daughter of that city.

Ozu continued to express his fascination with the movies in his own films: here matinee idol Ken Uehara makes a cameo appearance as a famous movie star recognized by the matrons as he makes his way to his theater seat. Ozu was probably also obliging his production company, Shochiku, by highlighting one of their stars in this way. He also obliged the firm that provided the costumes, Mitsukoshi, by having one of the women admire another's coat by saying, "Where'd you get that, Mitsukoshi?"

Finally, for collectors of esoterica, this is the only one of Ozu's extant features in which Chishu Ryu does not make an appearance, even in a bit part.

By the way, what did the lady forget?