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# Tuesday December 9

## Japanese Films Look at Japanese Theater

### Teinosuke Kinugasa Directs:

### Actress (Joyu) 7:30

The story of Sumako Matsui, the first great modern Japanese actress and, for many Japanese, their first public "twentieth century woman," was itself a drama that, in 1947, attracted both Kinugasa in *Actress*, and Mizoguchi in *The Love of the Actress Sumako*. Sumako Matsui worked with director Hogetsu Shimamura—whose Art Theatre (Geijutsu Gekijo) was the first to introduce Western-style realism, via Ibsen and Tolstoy, to the Japanese stage—and their love affair was a public scandal that ended in tragedy. Kinugasa's version of this scenario is a haunting elegy to personal and artistic freedom, told in a powerful visual style and drawing on a deeply felt performance by Isuzu Yamada as Sumako. Kinugasa's camera never leaves the theatre environment; like Shimamura (Yoshi Hijikata) himself, we become immersed in the creation of the Art Theatre, and in an artist's determination to awaken a land "where no one smiles anymore." Sumako comes to this environment wide-eyed but not ingenuous, determined after two "failed" marriages to land a job. *A Doll's House* was made for her and it is her first triumph. Meanwhile, the slow dismantling of Shimamura's homelife is shown in the yawns of his disapproving wife, sitting in the theater audience.... For Shimamura, as for Sumako, there is only one choice, to be or not to be, and Kinugasa reflects the existential ramifications of the script in a visually expressionistic style (more Western than Japanese). Outside and inside are continually counterposed in a complex use of windows and mirrors; figures appear and disappear at the director's will; fades and double fades remind us that he, too, was once a maverick artist (see *A Page of Madness*, November 5).

• Directed by Teinosuke Kinugasa. Written by Eijiro Hisaita, Kinugasa. Photographed by Asakazu Nakai. With Isuzu Yamada, Yoshi Hijikata, Ranko Akagi, Hajime Izu. (1947, 100 mins, In Japanese with English subtitles, 35mm, Print from PFA Collection)