



JAPANESE FILM FESTIVAL ARIZONA

Program

Friday, September 18th
Saturday, September 19th

ASU MIX Center
50 N. Centennial Way, Mesa, AZ 85201

Presented by



In partnership with

Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts

ASU The Sidney Poitier
New American Film School
Arizona State University

Welcome to the Fourth Annual Japanese Film Festival Arizona!

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this celebration of cinema, culture, and community. I am deeply grateful for your presence and support.

My hometown of Kumamoto, Japan, recently experienced a devastating earthquake that claimed many lives. In moments like these, stories can offer comfort, reflection, and connection, reminding us of our shared humanity.

As Arizona's only festival dedicated exclusively to Japanese cinema, we are committed to building cultural connections between Japan and Arizona through the stories we share. This year's program features a rich selection of films, from insightful documentaries and heartfelt animation to compelling dramas, many screening in Arizona for the first time. We are also proud to expand our short film program, highlighting emerging voices from around the world, including talented students from Arizona State University.

We are honored to continue our partnership with ASU's Sidney Poitier New American Film School and to host the festival at the ASU MIX Center, a vibrant hub for creativity, learning, and community engagement.

The Japanese Film Festival Arizona is made possible by the dedication of our volunteers, supporters, sponsors, and audiences like you. Thank you for joining us. We hope this year's films inspire new perspectives, meaningful conversations, and lasting connections.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Harumi Maejima
Founder & President, Japanese Film Festival Arizona



JAPANESE CULTURE CLUB OF ARIZONA

WE ARE YOUR BRIDGE BETWEEN ARIZONA AND JAPAN

Japanese Film Festival Arizona is organized by the Japanese Culture Club of Arizona (JCCA), a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organization.

Visit our website: jffarizona.org

Visit the Japanese Culture Club of AZ website at:

www.japanesecultureclubofaz.org

JOIN US!



INFORMATION: All ticket sales are final. No refunds or exchanges. All films and the screening order are subject to change without notice. Photographs may be taken at this event. The pictures may be used on associated websites, social media, and for marketing purposes related to the Japanese Film Festival. For more detailed information and updates, please check jffarizona.org

Children 12 and under, accompanied by a parent or guardian, receive free admission to film screenings. Parental discretion is advised; films are not MPAA rated unless otherwise indicated.

FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

MIX CENTER THEATER 201

Friday, September 18

1:30 PM

SHORTS PROGRAM 1: DREAM AND DESIRE

3:30 PM

Opening Film

A LIFE REIMAGINED: THE GEORGE MASA STORY

6:45 PM

Community Movie Night Free Event

YOUR NAME.

Preceded by a Taiko Drum Performance
by Ken Koshio

Saturday, September 19

10:30 AM

SHORTS PROGRAM 2: MEMORY AND LOVE

Preceded by a Taiko Drum Performance
by Ken Koshio

12:45 PM

Live Virtual Production Demo at the Volume Studio

2:15 PM

Centerpiece Film **HAPPYEND**

6:15 PM

Closing Night Film **KOKUHO**

*Films in Japanese or other non-English languages are presented with English subtitles.
English dialogue is not subtitled unless otherwise noted.

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FEATURES

Opening Film

A Life Reimagined: The George Masa Story

Directed by Paul Bonesteel

Friday, September 18, 3:30 p.m. | 86 min. | documentary

Through newly discovered materials and extensive research, Emmy Award-winning documentary filmmaker Paul Bonesteel explores the life of George Masa, a photographer and conservation advocate whose vision helped shape Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Appalachian Trail. Tracing Masa's journey from North Carolina back to Japan, Bonesteel uncovers the remarkable story of a visionary whose legacy endures in America's most treasured landscapes. **Stay for an exclusive Q&A with Director Paul Bonesteel!**



Your Name.

Community Movie Night

Free event, Family Friendly Program, English-dubbed

Directed by Makoto Shinkai

Friday, September 18, 6:45 p.m. | 107 min. | Rated PG

Co-Sponsored by the MIX Community Action Board

One morning, rural teenager Mitsuha and city boy Taki awaken to find they have mysteriously switched bodies. As they navigate each other's lives, a deep connection grows between them. Directed by Makoto Shinkai, this global smash hit blends romance, wonder, and stunning animation in an unforgettable coming-of-age story. *Your Name.* returns to the big screen.



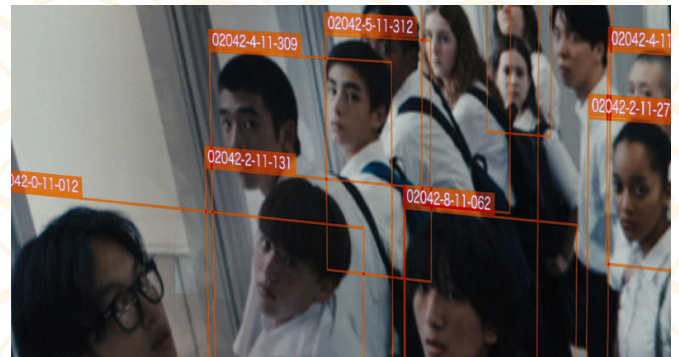
Centerpiece Film

Happyend

Directed by Neo Sora

Saturday, September 19, 2:15 p.m. | 113 min. | drama

In near-future Tokyo, best friends Yuta and Kou are preparing to graduate from high school when a prank leads their school to install an extensive surveillance system. In his fiction feature debut, writer-director Neo Sora delivers a striking coming-of-age drama that draws on his international upbringing to follow a group of multicultural teenagers navigating friendship, identity, and resistance in an increasingly uncertain world. Energized by a vibrant electronic soundtrack that captures the pulse and restlessness of youth, the film offers a timely and thought-provoking portrait of contemporary society. **Followed by an exclusive Q&A with Director Neo Sora!**



Closing Night Film

KOKUHO

Directed by Sang-il Lee

Saturday, September 19, 6:15 p.m. | 174 min. | drama

Beginning in the 1960s, Kikuo, the son of a yakuza family, is taken in by a renowned Kabuki actor and raised alongside his heir, Shunsuke. Bound by brotherhood and rivalry, the two dedicate their lives to mastering the demanding art of Kabuki. Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Sang-il Lee and adapted from Shuichi Yoshida's bestselling novel, *KOKUHO* (National Treasure) combines extraordinary performances, breathtaking stage sequences, and profound emotional depth in a stirring tribute to Japan's traditional performing arts. The film became Japan's highest-grossing live-action film of all time.



SHORTS PROGRAM 1: DREAM AND DESIRE

Featuring Filmmaker Q&A

Contains mature content. Parental discretion is advised.

Friday, September 18, 1:30 p.m.

The Fox Bride

Directed by Ryusei Emi
28 min. | drama

Inspired by Japanese folklore, this magical and haunting short follows Saburo and his sister during a game of hide-and-seek on a sunny afternoon, interrupted by a sudden rain shower. As Saburo witnesses the mysterious fox wedding, the boundary between childhood wonder and ancient superstition begins to blur.



BARA

Directed by Chavo
19 min. | drama

In the dim glow of a gay adult movie theater, a jubilant drag performer crosses paths with a married man struggling to conceal his sexuality. As their lives become intertwined, they confront love, identity, and the choices that will shape their futures. Offering a poignant glimpse into the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in contemporary Japan, the film is a moving exploration of desire, belonging, and self-acceptance.



How to Catch a Butterfly

Directed by Kiriko
26 min. | documentary

In this raw and compelling documentary, Dutch-Japanese filmmaker Kiriko Mechanicus writes letters to the young man who carried out the Atlanta spa shootings that claimed the lives of Asian women. Weaving together her own experiences and the gunman's recorded accounts, the film confronts racial fetishization while examining the complex desires that shape our lives and relationships.



SHORTS PROGRAM 2: MEMORY AND LOVE

Featuring Filmmaker Q&A

Family Friendly Program

Saturday, September 19, 10:30 a.m.

Sayonara Raifuku Ramen

Directed by Chiho Teratani

28 min. | drama

Hana helps her father run their beloved family ramen shop, making his decision to close it all the more difficult to accept. On the restaurant's final day, the unexpected arrival of her father's former apprentice interrupts their farewell, stirring memories and emotions as they prepare to say goodbye.



Round and Round

Directed by Hayato Otogi

13 min. | drama

In this enchanting single-take film, two friends reunite at the park where they spent their high school days. What begins as a casual conversation slowly awakens long-buried memories, revealing emotions and confessions left unsaid.



Itadakimasu

Directed by Fumiya Nakagawa

23 min. | drama

A visit from his single mother prompts a work-absorbed son to rediscover what truly matters through the flavors of her cooking. Named after the Japanese phrase expressing gratitude before a meal, *Itadakimasu* is a tender story of memory, reconciliation, and the enduring bonds nurtured through shared meals.



Candling

Directed by Rio Brown

13 min. | drama

Nineteen-year-old Quinn learns that her best friend is leaving for college. Grappling with feelings of loss and uncertainty, she struggles to express what she has never been able to say before their lives take them in different directions.

An invited ASU student film presented in collaboration with the Association of Filmmakers at ASU (AFA) to support emerging local talent.



MUSIC PERFORMANCE



Friday, September 18, 6:45 p.m. and Saturday, September 19, 10:30 a.m.

A TAIKO DRUM PERFORMANCE FLOWER OF PEACE BY KEN KOSHIO

Ken Koshio is a Japanese folk artist, singer-songwriter, and Taiko drummer dedicated to sharing the power of Japan's ancient musical traditions. Specializing in Taiko drumming, traditional folk music, and original compositions, he creates performances that celebrate cultural heritage while inspiring connection and healing. Through the rhythms of ancient sounds and music, Ken's mission is to foster peace, strengthen communities, and promote harmony between people and the natural world.

Join our team, Koshio Gumi!

*Feel Your Body and Soul Through
Traditional Japanese Drumming "Taiko"*



We are welcoming new students of all ages to play and experience Taiko (Japanese Drumming) with us!!



New Beginners Class Time in MESA!
Saturdays - 3 pm - 5 pm

Taiko is not only beating the drums but includes Japanese traditional discipline with
SHIN (心) Spirit, GI (技) Skill, TAI (体) Body
to create a great team and community building with
Wa (和) Taiko (太鼓) Drumming spirit for YOU

Please contact us to sign up!
480-622-1330 or koshiogumiaz@gmail.com
www.Kenkoshio.com / www.KoshioGumi.com



THANK YOU & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Sidney Poitier New American Film School
Arizona State University

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2026 ASU Interns

Marceline Morgan
Henry Larson



**JAPANESE
FILM
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*FILM LOVER
PASSPORT*

FEATURES

*A life
Reimagined:
The George
Masa Story*

Your name.

Happyend

KOKUHO



**SHORTS PROGRAM 1
*Dream and Desire***

The Fox Bride

BARA

*How to Catch
a Butterfly*



**SHORTS PROGRAM 2
*Memory and Love***

*Sayonara Raifuku
Ramen*

Round and Round

Itadakimasu

Candling



DON'T FORGET YOUR *STICKER* BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE THEATRE!

**REDEEM YOUR *COMPLETED PASSPORT* TO ENTER OUR RAFFLE FOR
A CHANCE TO WIN A *SPECIAL PRIZE!***



Enjoyed the Festival?

We'd love to hear from you.

Scan the QR code to complete our survey and sign up
for updates on next year's festival and early-bird discounts.

