



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"A few years after coming to Japan I was asked to give some advice to a pretty but extremely rebellious high schoolgirl, who was giving her parents hell. I had a lot of sympathy for the girl, because she reminded me in many ways of my own teenage troubles. I forgot about her for a long time but years later I started to write a screenplay about a rebellious schoolgirl and I realised that this central character was modelled on her.

That screenplay eventually became *Firefly Dreams*. I think that it is through the experience of trying to imaginatively enter the life of someone else that we come to understand ourselves. We see ourselves mirrored in other people and we come to see our shared predicaments. In the film Naomi gradually becomes curious about Mrs. Koide and her past. I wanted to catch the awakening of this curiosity, the awakening of Naomi's capacity for empathy, which I think lies at the heart of all good films and all good fiction. I was interested in the idea that Mrs. Koide and Naomi were mirrors for each other, in the same way that I had found a mirror of myself in a rebellious Japanese schoolgirl. While we were location hunting for the film we discovered an old globe and a dusty mirror in the junk-filled attic of an abandoned farmhouse.

When I saw the mirror and the globe I felt as if I had stumbled onto a key image for the film. The globe represents the greater world, the desire to escape and lead a larger, more exciting life. Both Naomi and Koide know this desire, and of course that is what brought me to Japan in the first place. The mirror represents self-knowledge, and that is what Naomi finds in Mrs. Koide, and what Mrs. Koide rediscovers through Naomi.

Another major element in the film is the setting itself, and the contrast between city and country. Travelling from the urban sprawl of Nagoya to the rural area where we shot is like travelling back in time. From the most modern place in the world it is possible to go back in time three or four hundred years in the space of a two hour drive. I wanted to catch this amazing contrast on film, a contrast that mirrors the gulf in experience between Naomi's age group and the pre-war generation of Mrs. Koide. And again I found a mirror for myself. Even though I now live on the other side of the globe I found numerous similarities between my home in Wales and the Japanese countryside.

While we were filming, the sounds, sights and smells took me back to my own childhood. I felt that I had come a long way but that I was in some strange way back where I had begun."

John Williams

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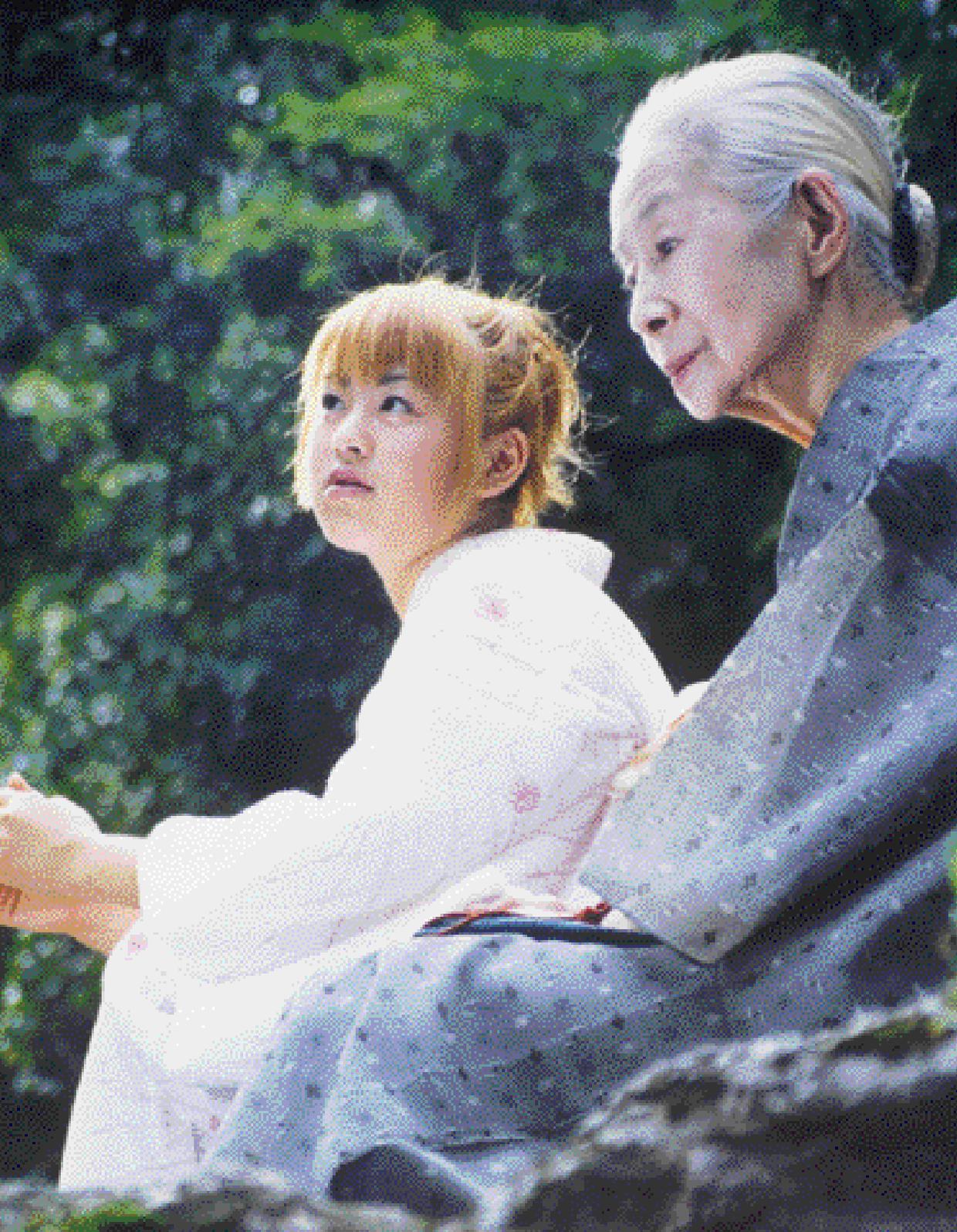
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A JOHN WILLIAMS FILM

FIREFLY DREAMS

MAHO UKAI

YOSHIE MINAMI

TSUTOMU NIWA

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One defining summer in the life of teenage rebel Naomi. Sent away from the city when her parents split up, she meets an old lady with a surprising secret in her past that brings them closer together.

SYNOPSIS

City brat Naomi is packed off to work at her aunt's hotel after her mother runs off with another man. She hates the hard work in the isolated hotel so her aunt arranges for her to look after an ageing relative, Mrs. Koide, who is suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Naomi hates this, too, but gradually becomes intrigued by the old woman and the mysteries in her past. As Naomi's summer romance with a local boy turns sour she grows closer to the old woman and they begin to share their secrets and their dreams.

Firefly Dreams is a film with deep resonance for contemporary Japan, where a huge gulf of experience separates the generation that experienced the war, and the younger rootless generations who have been raised in an era of peace but spiritually empty materialism. The story also contrasts the divide between frenetic urban Japan and the warmth and human values found in the countryside.

Director/Writer/Editor	John Williams
Producers	Kazuaki Kaneda, Martin B. Z. Rycroft, John Williams
Cinematographer	Yoshinobu Hayano
Musical director	Paul Rowe
Lighting director	Fumio Sugiyama
Sound engineer	Akihiko Suzuki
Chief assistant director	Masaki Takada

A 100 METER FILMS production.

Japan 2000

119 mins / 35mm / 1:1.85 / Colour / Dolby SR

Original version: Japanese

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CAST:

Naomi	Maho Ukai
Mrs. Koide	Yoshie Minami
Masaru	Tsutomu Niwa
Yumi	Etsuko Kimata
Naomi's Father	Atsushi Ono
Naomi's Mother	Chie Miyajima
Naomi's Aunt	Kyoko Kanemoto
Naomi's Uncle	Sadayasu Yamakawa
Naomi's Great Uncle	Haruo Nanahara
Tomoko	Ayako Sato
Hotel Guest	Tomohiko Hara
Pornographer	Seiji
Yuji	Shunsuke Kabiya
Teru	Dai Sakurai
Doctor	Tobako Sakita
Teacher	Sheharu Kamiya

PRODUCTION NOTES

Most Japanese films are conceived, funded and produced in Tokyo. Firefly Dreams is unusual as it was made completely independently and was mostly financed and produced in Nagoya. Casting began in October 1998. Auditions were held in Nagoya, Tokyo and Osaka to find three talented newcomers to play the roles of Naomi, Masaru and Yumi. Auditions were also held at the location to find local people to play supporting roles. Yoshie Minami, who is well known in Japan for her stage, television and film work agreed to play the role of Mrs. Koide.

The film was shot over six weeks in Horaciho, a rural region rich in history, folklore and natural beauty, located in Aichi Prefecture, in central Japan. The area is famous for its „Hana Matsuri“ in winter time, an ancient Dance of Devils to ward off evil spirits. The small town of Ikeba in which the scenes around Koide's house were shot has a thousand year history, dating back to when the village was founded by scattered and defeated warriors from the Miura clan. Yuya Onsen, where the hotel scenes were shot is a popular and scenic hot spring town on the banks of the river Kansa, whose crystal clear waters are surrounded by gently wooded slopes, and craggy volcanic hills.

JOHN WILLIAMS (DIRECTOR)

John Williams was born in St. Albans, England in 1962 but spent most of his childhood in Wales. He began making films at the age of 14 on a second hand 16mm Bolex, which he bought after seeing Werner Herzog's AGUIRRE; WRATH OF GOD. He studied French and German literature at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he continued to make films and was active in student theatre. From 1986 to 1988 he worked as a French teacher in a comprehensive school in North London and began writing feature length screenplays. In 1988, he moved to Japan, where he has lived and worked ever since. During this time, he has travelled widely in Asia and Africa, and has written, directed and produced eight short films, including a video documentary shot in Sri Lanka and a drama-documentary about refugees in Japan. In 1995 he established the production group 100 Meter Films.

MAHO UKAI (NAOMI)

The majority of people who see the film assume that Maho is the real thing - a genuine 17 year old teenage rebel - but when she came to the first screening nobody, not even the director recognised her. In reality 21 year old Maho hated the peroxide blonde hair she had to dye for the part and her personality couldn't be further from the directionless Naomi. She has been training as an actress since the age of 18, first in Nagoya University of the Arts and then with a talent agency in Tokyo. She was selected from over a thousand professionals and amateurs who auditioned for the role.

YOSHIE MINAMI (MRS. KOIDE)

Yoshie Minami is instantly recognizable to millions of Japanese TV viewers as the character actress who specializes in loveable grandmother roles. However, only diehard fans would know her name and many would be surprised to learn about her long stage career which began in 1934 as one of the "male" roles in the prestigious all woman "Takarazuka Review". She left the Takarazuka in the late thirties but returned to work as a serious actress after the war. As a stage actress she has at one time or another won most of Japan's major theatre awards and she is still working at the age of 85. During the Fifties and Sixties she was also in demand for film work and appeared as the teacher in Kurosawa's "IKIRU" and in numerous other supporting roles. There are many parallels between Yoshie Minami herself and, Mrs. Koide who she plays and during the filming, dialogue was rewritten to incorporate Minami-san's own experience.

