



OFFICIAL SELECTION
COMPETITION
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

KINO FILMS & COMME DES CINEMAS PRESENT

RADIANCE

A FILM BY NAOMI KAWASE



Synopsis

Misako is a passionate writer of film versions for the visually impaired. At a screening, she meets Nakamori, an older photographer who is slowly losing his eyesight. Misako soon discovers Nakamori's photographs, who will strangely bring her back to her past. Together, they will learn to see the radiant world that was invisible to her eyes.



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Director's Note

Without light, no colours.

Without light, no images.

Without light, impossible to make a film.

One could almost say that light is cinema.

We bathe quite naturally in light. But I only became properly aware of its true meaning when I discovered the existence of the camera. The act of fixing light on film is also a way of cutting up time. If the blind could see cinema, if they could write a story about the people around them, the resulting film could charm all those people around the world who are enchanted by the magic of cinema.

This was my starting idea for this film.

Misako's job is to write audio descriptions of films for the blind and visually impaired. Yet she had no particularly altruistic motivation for taking this up as a career. Her burning passion for cinema came about because it provided an escape from reality, the fixed condition of which she cannot change. Cinema has the power to turn a negative life into a positive one.

And yet there are people unable to watch movies, and Misako finds it unbearable that they must resign themselves to this. She wants to transmit the wonder of cinema even to those who cannot see.

So it is that Misako finds her raison d'être in audio description work.

Nakamori started suffering from a degenerative eye disease which put an end to his career as a photographer. Whereas people who are born blind are understood by society, it continually inflicts psychological trauma on people like Nakamori, who lose their sight after birth. He often feels dejected because of society's lack of understanding, by misconceptions about the enhanced other senses with which the blind compensate for their lack of sight, by expectations of humility, and so on.

Nakamori was a photographer who suddenly lost his sight. What hope can he have for the future? Can he really find the motivation to go on living?

Are there things we fail to understand even though we can see them? And, conversely, are there things we do understand even though we cannot see them?

Naomi Kawase

Misako is the main character of the film. Her job is to write audio descriptions of films for the blind and visually impaired. How did you come to the idea to picture this rare job in a film? How difficult was it to make it interesting for the audience to watch on screen?

When I checked the audio description for the film *An* at the request of the writers, I felt that they (the AD writers) might have an even fuller and deeper knowledge of cinema than film directors. And I instinctively realised I wanted to make a film whose hero was one of those people.

Misako comes to meet Nakamori, a great photographer who gradually loses his eyesight. They soon get closer to one another. How would you describe their relationship?

Misako wants there to be a tangible feeling of hope in cinema. She's disappointed with the life she's living because she's unable to get over its traumas. But once she realises that cinema isn't the same as life and that directors don't make films in which there is only hope, she agonises over the best way to deliver this film to visually impaired people. Nakamori is a photographer who still has some sight left, but he lives every day with the worry that he may be losing his sight completely. This is why, in the film, he feels that the over-explicative AD is obtrusive and he dislikes it, making him take a strong stance against Misako. On the surface, Misako and Nakamori appear to have opposing values, and they repel each other, but deep down they do have things in common.

And it's when they plunge into these depths inside each other that a real bond is born. And it's nothing less than the power of cinema that makes them bond.

But, being involved as I am in the production side of things, it was a very difficult process for me to make a film whose theme is cinema.

Right up until the end I was tormented by how I could merge my film *Radiance* with the film-within-the-film *Radiance*. In the end, I realised that this merging should happen in that dark cinema auditorium.

Light itself is very important in the film, both empirically and metaphorically. How challenging was it to shoot light?

It was impossible to shoot long scenes all by natural light in autumn in Japan. There were many fine days, but the hours of sunlight were short. All the same, we did of course shoot making the maximum use of the hours of light, not interrupting the tension between the actors, using mainly natural light and otherwise trying to make the light source as close to natural light as possible. There are quite a lot of night scenes in my films, but by using subliminally eye-catching lights, I worked out a balanced light design, which isn't just directed at the human beings.

An and Radiance both tell the stories of wounded souls finding each other, via food in An and cinema in Radiance... Can you talk about the role of the arts in your character's lives?

A journey to discover something real should never be exaggerated. It should appear naturally after serious self-reflection. The arts give you the chance to realise this too.

They aren't easy to understand or necessarily visible. We don't know where they are, but they exist. The characters in my films are at times hurt, at times lost. They go through a journey encountering the arts, a journey called life. Cinema can give the characters' lives a force, like a beam of radiance.





The main character in An (Tokue) is also afflicted with a disability. Despite this she transforms the people around her. Would you describe the character of Nakamori in these terms, and could you talk about the role that his disability plays in the film?

I think that in our lives there are many things we find troublesome, because we can see everything, and disgusting, because we end up knowing all of them. Of course we need a willingness and have to make an effort to know everything, but it can cause heartbreak. We human beings sometimes need to be humble too. The process whereby blind people get to “see” cinema using AD is similar to the process whereby someone starts to live another life while still being fully in their own world. Cinema can make the world a bigger and wider place for them too. So, when Nakamori accepts that he can't see, another door to a new life opens up.

Masatoshi Nagase, who plays Nakamori in Radiance already starred in your previous film, An. How did you help him prepare for the very particular role of Nakamori?

Since the role entailed his ending up totally blind, I asked him, before the shooting started, to spend time in his everyday life wearing goggles which made him blind. That let him experience how much fear visually impaired people face in their everyday lives, such as when a bicycle suddenly passes by when you're walking down the street. It showed him that the normal environment of society isn't easy to live in for visually impaired people. After that, we started creating Nakamori's isolation. The film crew were also constantly creating an environment which helped to develop Nakamori's emotions.

The film also features iconic Japanese actor Tatsuya Fuji (In the Realm of the Senses). How did you come to cast him for this role?

He was in a 2016 film called *Higashi No Okami* and I offered him a role in *Radiance*. He brilliantly played a double role, that of the director and the leading actor. He's a great actor, 75 years old, but he was fearless in tackling challenges like rolling down the dune and a love scene with a younger actress.

Naomi Kawase Selective Filmography

- 2017 **RADIANCE** / Cannes Film Festival, in Competition
- 2015 **AN** / Cannes Film Festival, Un Certain Regard, Opening Film
- 2014 **STILL THE WATER** / Cannes Film Festival, in Competition
- 2011 **HANEZU** / Cannes Film Festival, in Competition
- 2008 **NANAYOMACHI**
- 2007 **THE MOURNING FOREST** / Cannes Film Festival - Grand Prix
- 2003 **SHARA** / Cannes Film Festival, in Competition
- 2000 **HOTARU** / Locarno Film Festival - CICAIE Award & FIPRESCI Prize
- 1997 **SUZAKU** / Cannes Film Festival - Caméra d'Or

Cast

Nakamori
Misako Ozaki
Kitabayashi & Juzo
Yasuko Ozaki
Tomoko & Tokie
Sano

Masatoshi Nagase
Ayame Misaki
Tatsuya Fuji
Kazuko Shirakawa
Misuzu Kanno
Mantarô Koichi

Crew

Production
Co-Production
In association with
Producers
With the participation of
And of the
Screenplay
Director
DOP
1st Assistant Director
Lighting
Production Designer
Original Music
Editor
Production Sound Mixer
Sound Editors
Sound re-recording mixer

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Kumié
mk2 films
Haut et Court
Naoya Kinoshita
Masa Sawada
Yumiko Takebe
Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée
Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan
Naomi Kawase
Naomi Kawase
Arata Dodo
Yuki Kondo, Miho Hojô
Yasuhiro Ôta
Setsuko Shirakawa
Ibrahim Maalouf
Tina Baz
Roman Dymny
Roman Dymny
Boris Chapelle
Olivier Goinard

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