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COMME DES CINÉMAS & NAGOYA BROADCASTING NETWORK PRESENT

# **HARMONIUM**

**A FILM BY KOJI FUKADA**

**mk2**



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# HARMONIUM

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## SYNOPSIS

Toshio hires Yasaka in his workshop.  
This old acquaintance, who has just been  
released from prison, begins to meddle  
in Toshio's family life.



# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This film is linked to one of my previous films, *Hospitalité*, which came out in 2010. They're like two sides of the same coin.

Initially, *Hospitalité* was only supposed to be a pilot before shooting *Harmonium*. The tone of *Hospitalité* is that of a comedy, while *Harmonium* can be described as a tragedy. However, like a coin whose two sides complete each other, these two films present an identical, banal, and extremely universal theme: that of "family."

By nature, humans are living beings, all carrying a loneliness they are powerless to defeat. What I wish to describe here is a family in which each member becomes aware of this state but is obliged to live with other people, in spite of it all. This is inevitable.

I'm tired of all these Japanese films idealizing family ties.

By continuing to relay this outdated and stereotypical image of an "ideal family," we deny the various other "family types" that actually exist. I wish to describe an "already-collapsed family" because looking at the collapse of a family as a tragedy is a way of idealizing what it could have been.

*Harmonium* asks the question of the familial system. It must shake things up, show that original loneliness, and bring out the bonds that nevertheless endure. I think my 21<sup>st</sup> century "family portrait" will question the spectator – in this society where people are beginning to realize that our conception of the family, which had protected us, while smothering us at the same time, was nothing more than an illusory construction.

Kôji Fukada





A photograph of Kôji Fukada, the director, standing in a lush, green forest. He is wearing a blue button-down shirt, dark trousers, and glasses. He has headphones around his neck and is gesturing with his right hand as if speaking. The background is filled with dense foliage and trees, creating a natural, somewhat somber atmosphere.

## INTERVIEW WITH KÔJI FUKADA

**The theme of family is at the centre of Harmonium.**

**What was your idea at the outset?**

For me, family is an absurdity. A human being – who is an individual entity – meets someone, starts a relationship, becomes a parent, has kids, and lives with people as if it were the most natural thing in the world. But, if you think about it, it's very strange. Why live with other people? Every population creates countries and believes in certain gods but, despite everything, they all end up fighting over some football score. Man lives in society by bringing people together that do not understand one another. The smallest version of this is a family.

**Tadanobu Asano plays Yasaka, an old friend of Toshio's, the head of the family. Yasaka turns out to be more and more frightening...**

**How did you come up with this character?**

Yasaka is an example of a certain violence that can irrationally develop in the world. I started thinking about this film in 2007. At first, I imagined that the arrival of a violent intruder might be the starting point for a couple's reflection on their relationship. Then I began asking myself what exactly violence was. Basically, violence is an inexplicable absurdity. Like with a natural disaster, where the causes are never a question of good or evil, criminals can never precisely explain the motives of their crime at the moment they commit it. I think we live in a certain mundane ambiguity, far from the concept of Good and Evil. I don't see Yasaka as a symbol of evil. He is neither good nor bad. I want to show that the good or evil in all of us is the result of our relationship to others.

**How do you work with actors? Do you have a particular relationship to Kanji Furutachi, who plays the role of Toshio?**

Ultimately, I think an actor has a form of expression that is theirs and theirs alone. This expression is what interests me, and it's what I wish to highlight in my films. This is cinema's strength. I have worked regularly with Kanji Furutachi since a short film I made with him in 2008. He's a friend and I often talk to him about cinema and acting styles. I got a lot out of our discussions for this film, too. He's an exceptional actor who is always seeking to play his character as realistically as possible.



**The tone of *Harmonium* is darker than your previous films, and closer to a psychological thriller...**

Portraying people is an exercise I would describe as being similar to peering over the edge of the abyss and observing its depths. And, in order to observe these depths, you need to get close to the edge, even if it means falling in. In other words, you need to come close to the dark side of the people's hearts without falling in. To do this, you need to be aware of just how far you can go. That's why, in this film, I hope to get as close to the brink as possible with the spectator. That's why the original title of this film in Japanese means "on the brink". At first, I didn't think I was making a happy film or a dark film. But, compared to my previous ones, this film is one step closer to the depths of the soul.

**To what extent is this film realistic? Do you have any particular sources of inspiration?**

For me, naturalism and realism are two different things. Acting requires something natural, but natural acting doesn't lead to cinematic realism. Cinema aspires to a type of truth and realism that can take on many different forms. In their films, René Clair, Robert Bresson or the Dardenne Brothers, are all looking for different forms of realism. I feel very close to Rohmer's methods. He would talk to actors and then build a very precise script. With this script, the actors would develop an acting style that was entirely their own. Rohmer was a genius of story construction, and he'd use this very rigid script to then direct his actors. He doesn't explain character psychology, but allows us to imagine it with this precise structure, where actors must create their own space in every scene. I think this is how the actor gives the spectator the time to develop his/her own imagination. That's the secret of modern realism.

# FILMOGRAPHY

**KÔJI FUKADA** (Born 1980, Tokyo, Japan)

2016 **HARMONIUM**  
2015 **SAYONARA**  
2013 **AU REVOIR L'ÉTÉ / Hotori No Sakuko**  
2010 **HOSPITALITÉ**  
2008 **HUMAN COMEDY IN TOKYO**  
2006 **LA GRENADIÈRE** (short animated film)  
2004 **LA CHAISE**





## CREW

Production

Co-Production

Producers

Line Producer

With support from

Screenplay

Directed by

Cinematography

Assistant Director

Lighting

Production design

Editing

Music

Sound

Sound re-recording mixer

Costumes

Original Title

Comme des Cinémas

Nagoya Broadcasting Network

MAM Films

Masa Sawada, Hiroshi Niimura

Tsuyoshi Toyama

Mountaingate Production

CNC

Kôji Fukada

Kôji Fukada

Kenichi Negishi

Saku Yamato

Thomas Takamura

Kensuke Suzuki

Kôji Fukada

Hiroyuki Onogawa

Junji Yoshikata

Olivier Goinard

Keiko Murashima

淵に立つ (*Fuchi ni tatsu*)

Japan - France / 118 min / Color / 1.66 / HD / 5.1 / 2016

## CAST

Yasaka

Akie

Toshio

Takashi

Hotaru (young)

Hotaru (adult)

Tadanobu Asano

Mariko Tsutsui

Kanji Furutachi

Taiga

Momone Shinokawa

Kana Mahiro

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