

**MEDIA RELEASE: WEDNESDAY 14 AUGUST**  
**SUPERNATURAL, STRANGE AND SPINE-TINGLING:**  
**JAPANESE FILM FESTIVAL UNVEILS HORROR CLASSICS PROGRAM**

---

From age-old ghost stories to chilling tales from the spirit realm, the **Japanese Film Festival (JFF)** presents a **FREE Classics** program featuring spine-tingling horror from **21 September – 26 November**. Titled ***Grief and Vengeance: Otherworldly Tales*** in Sydney, with abridged versions in Melbourne and Canberra, the program features landmark films from Japanese horror pioneer Nobuo Nakagawa, alongside contemporaries Masaki Kobayashi and Satsuo Yamamoto.

The Classics program arrives in **Canberra** at the National Film and Sound Archive (21 – 22 Sept); **Sydney** at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (2 – 23 Oct); and **Melbourne** at the Astor Theatre (25 – 26 Nov).

Highlights include winner of the Special Jury Prize at the 1965 Cannes Film Festival ***Kwaidan*** by Masaki Kobayashi, an anthology of four separate, chilling tragedies – from a man saved from death by a snow goddess to a blind musician singing for a dead Emperor – and Nobuo Nakagawa’s renowned ***The Ghost Story of Yotsuya***, about a greedy samurai whose disfigured wife comes back to haunt him.

“The 2019 Classics program is a bone-chilling celebration of Japan’s distinctly unnerving take on the horror genre, from eerie tales of ancient curses across centuries, to a young student’s disturbing descent into the underworld,” said **Japanese Film Festival Programmer, Simonne Goran**.

“Take a deeper look under the surface of these terrifying tales, and viewers will discover a fascinating glimpse into traditional Japanese folklore and the spirit world spanning across many eras,” she said.

The program is led by stories centred on the traditional art of Japanese kabuki theatre – in Nobuo Nakagawa’s final film ***The Living Koheiji***, an unpopular actor haunts his best friend, after a jealous feud leads to his accidental death; and in ***The Bride from Hades***, later adapted into a kabuki play, a man unknowingly falls in love with a recently-deceased courtesan. ***The Ghost Story of Yotsuya*** is also an adaptation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century kabuki masterpiece by Nanboku Tsuruya.

Mere mortals clash with supreme supernatural forces in ***Black Cat Mansion***, about a couple battling against a violent ghostly apparition and a centuries-old curse; and ***The Adventures of Tobisuke***, in which a puppeteer and a young girl must cross a treacherous valley filled with fantastic demons and creatures, as they journey to the base of Japan’s highest mountain.

Rounding out the program is ***Jigoku (Hell)***, chronicling a young student’s descent into Hell following a hit-and-run accident. The film sets itself apart for its experimental, shocking and gory final scenes, in which director Nobuo Nakagawa transports viewers to the underworld, and the film’s characters undergo the wrath of Hell for their sins.

In Sydney, the Classics program is complemented by two exhibitions: ***Japan supernatural*** (2 Nov 2019 – 8 Mar 2020) at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, with over 180 wildly imaginative works by Japanese artists from the legendary Katsushika Hokusai to superstar Takashi Murakami; and ***RETRO HORROR: Supernatural and the Occult in Postwar Japanese Manga*** (18 Oct 2019 – 24 Jan 2020) at the Japan Foundation Gallery, showcasing two early horror manga pioneers, Hideshi Hino and Tsunezo Murotani, through original drawings and reproductions of iconic works.

This free Classics program is a satellite event of the annual **Japanese Film Festival**. The festival's main program is a ticketed event, which screens at Event Cinemas, George Street in November and offers the best in new releases and contemporary Japanese cinema.

The Classics program is free admission. See [japanesefilmfestival.net](http://japanesefilmfestival.net) for ticketing details.

**2019 Japanese Film Festival Classics films include:**

- ***The Bride from Hades***

One night during the Obon lantern festival, Shinzaburo meets a mysterious, beautiful woman and her servant. When they meet again, he learns the woman's name is Otsuyu and that she was forced to become a courtesan to support herself after her father's tragic death. Though Shinzaburo has a fiancée due to an arranged marriage, he falls desperately in love with the alluring Otsuyu, and they decide to spend the remaining nights of Obon together. However, there are rumours spreading throughout town that a courtesan named Otsuyu recently committed suicide over accepting an unwanted man as a patron.

- ***Jigoku (Hell)***

A truly poetic and vibrant piece of horror cinema, *Jigoku (Hell)* is director Nobuo Nakagawa's departure from the traditional Japanese ghost story. A young theology student who has moved to Tokyo finds himself in strife after a hit and run incident leaves him guilt-ridden and stuck with a mysterious counterpart who won't stop tormenting him. The series of events that follow lead the student down a dark path of death and destruction, affecting those closest to him. In the experimental, shocking and gory final scenes of the film, Nakagawa transports viewers to the underworld, where the film's characters undergo the wrath of hell for their sins in a visual sequence that is equally breathtaking and disturbing.

- ***Kwaidan***

Based on stories from Lafcadio Hearn's collections of Japanese folk tales, Masaki Kobayashi's *Kwaidan* received significant international recognition, including the Special Jury Prize at the 1965 Cannes Film Festival and an Academy Award nomination for Best Foreign Language Film. *Kwaidan* is an anthology of four separate, chilling tragedies of the supernatural and ghostly worlds. From a man on the brink of death who is saved by a snow goddess to an impoverished samurai who leaves his wife to marry a woman from a wealthier family, each unsettling story is depicted with colourful, surrealist imagery.

- ***The Living Koheiji***

Set during the Edo period, *The Living Koheiji* is director Nobuo Nakagawa's final film. In this theatrical ghost story, unpopular kabuki actor Kohata Koheiji is desperately in love with his best friend's wife. After a jealous feud leads to Koheiji's unexpected death, he hauntingly reappears to his best friend Nako Takuro, whose grief and guilt leave him adrift in a world between dreams and reality —testing the strength of his wife's love.

- ***The Adventures of Tobisuke***

In war-torn Kyoto, a kind-hearted puppeteer named Tobisuke meets Ofuku, a young girl desperate to find her lost mother, when he rescues her from a dangerous man. To his dismay, Tobisuke is struck on the head during the scuffle and loses his memory. Ofuku tells him that if they travel to her mother's hometown at the base of Japan's highest mountain, they'll find both her mother and the mythic golden fruit that can restore his memories. The unlikely duo embark on an adventure depicted through elaborate sets in this early film by famed Japanese horror director Nobuo Nakagawa. Along the way, they'll face demons, travel through Fake Town, and survive the Valley of the Dead — trusting no one but each other.

- ***Black Cat Mansion***

In this nonlinear ghost story that mixes black and white and colour footage, Dr Kuzumi and his wife Yoriko relocate from the city to the countryside for a healthier environment to help cure Yoriko's illness. Not long after moving into the old mansion that serves as their new home and clinic, Yoriko has uneasy feelings about her new abode which are soon confirmed by frightening apparitions of a haggard old woman. As the visitations become more frequent and threatening, the couple learn about the mansion's violent history and a curse that was placed on Yoriko's ancestor. Will Dr Kuzumi and Yoriko be able to lift the curse before it's too late?

- ***The Ghost Story of Yotsuya***

This adaptation of the 19th century kabuki masterpiece by Nanboku Tsuruya is a tale of a greedy ronin samurai, Iemon Tamiya, who will stop at nothing to get what he wants — especially if it involves killing. While murder may serve him well in the short term, he must eventually pay the price when his disfigured wife comes back to haunt him.

-- ENDS --

**Stay up to date with JFF:**

Website: [www.japanesefilmfestival.net](http://www.japanesefilmfestival.net)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/japanesefilmfest](https://www.facebook.com/japanesefilmfest)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/japanfilmfest](https://www.twitter.com/japanfilmfest)

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/japanesefilmfest](https://www.instagram.com/japanesefilmfest)

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Original Spin P: +61 2 8065 7363

Amy Owen [amy@originalspin.com.au](mailto:amy@originalspin.com.au) M: +61 404 977 338

Genvin In [genvin@originalspin.com.au](mailto:genvin@originalspin.com.au) M: +61 449 939 864

## EDITOR'S NOTES

## FILM SCHEDULE

Location	Dates	Film
Canberra (NFSA)	21 - 22 Sept.	<i>The Ghost Story of Yotsuya</i> <i>The Living Koheiji</i> <i>The Adventures of Tobisuke</i> <i>Black Cat Mansion</i>
Sydney (AGNSW)	2 - 23 Oct.	<i>The Bride from Hades</i> <i>Jigoku (Hell)</i> <i>Kwaidan</i> <i>The Living Koheiji</i> <i>The Adventures of Tobisuke</i> <i>Black Cat Mansion</i> <i>The Ghost Story of Yotsuya</i>
Melbourne (Astor Theatre)	25 - 26 Nov.	<i>Kwaidan</i> <i>Black Cat Mansion</i> <i>The Bride from Hades</i> <i>The Ghost Story of Yotsuya</i>

## **ABOUT THE JAPAN FOUNDATION, SYDNEY**

The Japan Foundation, Sydney is the Australian arm of the Japan Foundation, which was established by the Japanese government to promote cultural and intellectual exchange between Japan and other nations. It runs a diverse range of programs and events, including exhibitions, talk events, grant programs and Japanese language courses for all levels from beginner to advanced. The Japan Foundation was established in 1972 with a global network of 25 offices in 24 countries. The Australian office was founded in 1978.