



**Saving Film & Television for Future Generations**

*The Yanai Initiative and UCLA Film & Television Archive present The Art of the Benshi film series,  
March 1-3, 2019 at the*

*Billy Wilder Theater at the Hammer Museum in Westwood*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**LOS ANGELES, CA (Feb. 25, 2019)** – The UCLA Film & Television Archive, with the support of the Yanai Initiative for Globalizing Japanese Humanities, presents *The Art of the Benshi* series, a once-in-a-lifetime film and live presentation pairing rare prints of Japanese classics and American masterworks (*The Cheat* and *Silence*), March 1-3, 2019, at the Billy Wilder Theater at the Hammer Museum in Westwood.

This weekend-long series will feature performances by three of Japan's most renowned contemporary benshi performers, who will enliven the cinema experience with expressive word and gesture: Kataoka Ichirō, Sakamoto Raikō and Ōmori Kumiko. Trained by benshi masters of the previous generation, they will each perform their unique art live on stage in Japanese (with English subtitles on the screen) to multiple films. Each performance and screening will be accompanied by a musical ensemble: Yuasa Jōichi (conductor, shamisen/a three-stringed traditional Japanese musical instrument), Tanbara Kaname (piano), Furuhashi Yuki (violin), Suzuki Makiko (flute) and Katada Kisayo (drums). Many of the accompanying scores will be drawn from the Hirano Collection at Waseda University's Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum, an unparalleled resource for Japan's historical silent film scores.

**What is *The Art of the Benshi*?**

During the silent film era in Japan, which extended into the early 1930s, film screenings were accompanied by live narrators, called benshi. Each with their own highly refined personal style, they deftly narrated action and dialogue to illuminate—and often to invent—emotions and themes that heightened the audience's connection to the screen. In the industry's early years, benshi functioned much in the way scientific lecturers did in early American and European cinema, providing simple explanations about the new medium and the moving images on screen. Benshi vigorously resist the coming of sound to Japanese cinema and the practice continued, though with increasing rarity, into the sound era. The art, today, is carried on by a small group of specialized performers who have been apprenticed by the preceding generations of benshi, creating a continuous lineage back to the original performers.

Admission to each program is \$10:

March 1, 7:30 p.m. - *A Diary of Chuji's Travels* + Shorts

March 2, 7:30 p.m. - *Dragnet Girl* + Shorts

March 3, 3 p.m. - *Silence* + Shorts

March 3, 7 p.m. - *The Cheat* + Shorts

For more information about *The Art of the Benshi*, please visit the Archive website:  
[www.cinema.ucla.edu](http://www.cinema.ucla.edu).

### **About UCLA Film & Television Archive**

The mission of the UCLA Film & Television Archive is to save film and television for future generations.

The Archive is internationally renowned for rescuing, preserving and showcasing moving image media and is dedicated to ensuring that the visual achievements of our time are available for information, education and enjoyment. The sixth-largest moving image repository in the world, and the second largest in the U.S., behind only the Library of Congress, the Archive's more than 450,000 holdings are stored in a state-of-the-art facility that meets and exceeds all preservation standards, from nitrate film to digital.

A unit of UCLA's School of Theater, Film and Television, the Archive's Research and Study Center provides free access to its holdings to researchers, writers and educators. Many of the Archive's projects are screened at prestigious film events around the globe, as well as locally at UCLA's Billy Wilder Theater.

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