JFLA Lecture Series 33

MADAME BUTTERFLY AND THE BIRTH OF THE MOTION PICTURE ACTRESS IN JAPAN

Lecturer: Prof. Daisuke Miyao

Date: Thursday, June 23

Venue: The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles
(5700 Wilshire Blvd. # 100, Los Angeles, CA 90036)

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In Japan, motion picture actress did not exist until 1918 when Hanayagi Harumi starred in "Sei no kagayaki" (Radiance of Life). Before this film, the majority of female characters in motion pictures were played by onnagata, female impersonators in kabuki. One exception was Aoki Tsuruko (1891-1961), a female Japanese star in early Hollywood. The popular narrative of "Madame Butterfly" played a significant role behind Aoki’s stardom. How did Aoki become a star in Hollywood in the 1910s? What impact did Aoki’s star image have on Japanese cinema?

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