

# Japanese film tapestry

**Richard Zywockiewicz**

Masahiro Shinoda, referred to as the greatest of Japan's "New wave" directors, explores contemporary themes while engaging on a metaphorical journey through his country's history and traditions.

In the **Ballad of Orin**, now playing at the Fine Arts theatre, he, like the film's characters, tries coming to grips with pure feelings, natural and instinctive.

The main character, ORIN, is blind itinerant singer. Expected to remain chaste, Orin is banished from the group after she remains chaste. Orin is banished from the group after

succumbing to the advances of a man. She submits, afterwards, to any seeking to take advantage of her blind condition.

Finally she meets Heitar, who neither demands sex from her, nor allows her to be used by others. His limiting demands on Orin, lead to his demise. Through a tapestry of beautiful images, we revel in the natural landscapes ORIN can only smell or hear around her.

The film deals with sensuality on its own terms. Neither Heitaro's celibacy, nor Orin's insatiable need for physical love are explained, only the

feelings themselves are examined.

The film is photographed and directed with rich sensitivity, never relying on gratuitous aesthetics. At the core of Shinoda's work is a passionate need to examine Japan and the Japanese national character and the political and economic peculiarities that led to the war. His military antagonists may be cliché, yet Shinoda shines through with an austere dramatic sense that is a directorial blessing.

Like most Japanese and Asian films, **The Ballad of Orin** deals with "man" and his natural environment, and I hope to see more in the future.



The Ballad of Orin at the Fine Arts thru next week.

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