

original motion picture soundtrack

WINNER
8 AFI awards including
**best
score**

J A P A N E S E S T O R Y

move

MUSIC BY Elizabeth Drake

OUTWARDLY,

Japanese Story is about Sandy, a work-driven, somewhat emotionally remote geologist, who co-owns a software company with Baird, that specialises in geological maps.

They desperately need a sale and when a Japanese businessman shows a passing interest, Baird and Sandy make plans to meet him.

Hiromitsu just might be interested, although his communication so far has been vague, and he has changed travel plans on them again. Sandy will now have to show Hiromitsu around. There's only one problem. Hiromitsu wants to see quite a lot and Sandy knows nothing about the Japanese.

Maybe Hiromitsu has his own reasons for being in Australia, but he doesn't appear to be too concerned about the mine or the software. He's just come from Uluru and now he wants to go on a field trip to the vast Pilbara ore fields in the north-west of Western Australia. It's not Sandy's idea of fun and not helped by Hiromitsu mistaking her for his 'driver' when she meets him at the airstrip. As far as Sandy is concerned he is rude, incommunicative and quintessentially sexist. Hiromitsu is not too pleased with Sandy either — she is loud, rude and aggressive, the typically unattractive Western woman — as far as he's concerned.

Although unprepared for the desert — this was meant to be little more than a brief drive — Hiromitsu insists that Sandy drive him out to an abandoned iron ore mine. Inevitably, they get bogged, and of course not being Australian, Hiromitsu has no idea



of the potential dangers of the desert.

Only after reading the hire car's survival manual does he finally acknowledge that they are stranded in the desert in a potentially life or death situation. No two-way radio. Miles from anywhere. And no-one knows where they are.

Sandy struggles to convince Hiromitsu that walking back to town is not a realistic option. Sandy's innate practicality and experience in the bush come to the fore but it takes several attempts and a cold night in the red desert sands before the four-wheel-drive is freed from the sand bog.

As they journey further and further into the desert, they leave more and more of what they know behind — as 'Hiro' says, now they are "off the map". The Japanese man is entirely out of his depth when confronted by this landscape. Fissures in his cold exterior start to crack, and then completely open up. Exposed, yet liberated, this unlikely couple discover an intimacy neither would ever have imagined possible.

Against the background of the elemental Australian landscape, so much space and so few people, Sandy and Hiromitsu play out a story of human inconsequence in the face of the blistering universe.

Some stories can change your life. This is Sandy's story. Sandy's "Japanese" story.

A LARGER WORLD

Japanese Story's producer Sue Maslin, director Sue Brooks and writer Alison Tilson first worked together in the late eighties and went on to make *Road to Nhill* (1997), an endearing comedy that universally won hearts and accolades.

"I find it terribly hard to become involved in a project unless I completely fall in love with it," noted Maslin, "and that's exactly what happened with *Japanese Story*. We had all worked together on *Road to Nhill*, and survived the experience, and wanted to collaborate again. Then Alison showed me a script that she'd been working on for a few years, which happened to be *Japanese Story*. I thought it the most extraordinary piece of writing and together we decided to make it our next feature."

Throughout *Japanese Story* several themes reverberate. "For me," noted Maslin, "surfaces, and what lies beneath them, is a key theme. The fact that Sandy is a geologist is intricately linked in a thematic sense to her story as she lives a life of surfaces. But through this adventure and the extreme landscape encircling her, she stops just looking and starts to really see. And it's interesting that it happens amidst that landscape because that very landscape is renowned for the richness of its depths.

Even though you're surrounded by desert, you might be standing above a massive sub-artesian water basin, so there's always this incredible complexity just below the surface."

"It's bizarre," mused Brooks. "We walk across this earth without stopping to think what's underneath, and the same applies to the people in this film. But really Sandy's no more closed than any one of us. We're all somewhat factious and engrossed in our hectic lives and in filling those lives with activity and, to a degree, self-importance. We rarely take stock. But in the end, we're all just souls. There's a moment in *Japanese Story* where Sandy and Hiromitsu are exposed, a moment where it's just them and the universe and that's the moment where they make a connection. But I think for most of us such a moment rarely happens because the daily grind is safer."

Tilson concluded, "Initially neither Sandy or Hiromitsu look beyond their cultural differences or outward personas to try and 'connect'. But of course the ultimate connection is the realisation that we're just part of a much larger world, and not the centre of the universe. Hopefully once we understand that we can interact on a deeper level.



COMPOSER ELIZABETH DRAKE INTRODUCES THE MUSIC

I knew as soon as I read the script of *Japanese Story* that this was a gift to the composer. Apart from the inherent strengths and fascination of the script itself, there was the opportunity for the inter-weaving and layering of elements of Japanese culture, (Japanese instruments, modes, folksong and ritual) with western orchestral instruments, tonality and harmonic composition. The themes of cultural displacement, tragedy and transformation were as relevant to composition as they were to story-telling.

The first piece to find a place was the music for the opening titles. Here the idea was to suggest cultural displacement, by inter-weaving the sound of an instrument of Japanese culture, the shakuhachi, with an ancient aboriginal melody and with percussion. I wanted to suggest that we are all foreigners, trespassers on aboriginal land. On this CD the music is repeated with the addition of the sounds of insects developed by Livia Ruzic for the film **2**.

My research into Japanese music and Okinawan folksong was extensive. I had worked with the shakuhachi before, was aware of the modes and the flexibility of pitch, and also the notion of time in Japanese music being associated with the breath. I had studied Zen and had been aware of the use of percussion instruments to delineate time and also to “wake up” the mind.

The two folksongs *Asadoya Bushi* and *Chinsagu No Hana* are traditional folksongs from Okinawa. They are traditionally sung by

three or more singers, a kind of folk choir, accompanied by a jamisen a slightly larger snake-skin version of the shamisen played by Satsuki Odamura for this recording, and percussion. I chose to work with a solo



Western singer, Shelley Scown, who was already experienced in Eastern inflections and pronunciation. She had an immediate affinity with the two folksongs.

The development of the folksong *Chinsagu No Hana*, with the voice, shamisen, koto and percussion together with a western string orchestra brings together many elements in the film. *Chinsagu No Hana* is used during the scene in the hotel **5** and for the entire final quarter hour **12**. This

forges a connection between the characters' first sexual encounter and the final theme of transformation through difference. It is intended as a kind of ritual, to reflect the inherent ritual component of the Japanese culture, and to create a sense of ritual over the final scenes.

The folksong *Asadoya Bushi* **8** is set at the waterhole.

From the beginning I felt that string instruments, both Eastern and Western, would best suit the desert landscape – the desert as a vibrating string. I also felt they would enhance, express and carry the emotion of the film. I experimented with traditional Japanese music for koto and shakuhachi, but found that this tended to over-simplify and essentialise the Japanese man. I needed to move away from the stereotype and make an intervention into Japanese music.

The passing of time has been an important conceptual element in the composition of the music. Duration, the idea of extending and stretching time, is employed to simulate real time, to create the impression of events occurring in real time. I have used the ostinato pattern and its inherent use of repetition, to create this effect. The waterhole scene (**9** and **10**) is allowed to unfold as if it were really happening, the music designed to enhance the effect of events unfolding.

BONUS TRACKS

Hiromitsu **14** is an alternative piece I composed for *At The Waterhole*. This is a substantial orchestral piece, played to picture



and then orchestrated by Ricky Edwards. This cue is the one heard in the American version of the film.

Night Drive 15 was an attempt to get inside Sandy's head as she drove through the night. I think this belongs more to a psychological thriller, it is too dark for this film. It has not been used.

ELIZABETH DRAKE trained as a classical pianist, studying in Melbourne, Siena and London. She has performed as soloist with most ABC Orchestras and with the Australian Youth Orchestra under Willem van Otterloo. Her interest in theatre and film began while at Melbourne University where she produced music for many Melbourne University Student Theatre productions.

While in London she developed her interest in new music and inter-disciplinary performance.

Returning to Australia she composed music for Pram Factory productions and formed a duo with Jan Cornall with whom she performed *Failing in Love Again*. Moving to Sydney she began to compose for film, her first film being *For Love Or Money*, a feature-length documentary about women and work in Australia. While in Sydney she



was introduced to film theory and developed theories of sound and music in film. She has lectured and written on these subjects.

She has composed music for political films, *Kemira*, *Diary of a Strike*, *Black Man's Houses*, *For Love or Money*, and certain essay films. Her interest in French philosophy and semiotics has given her access to many interesting film projects, *Breathing Underwater*, *Shadow Panic*, *Born to Shop*, *My Life Without Steve*. She received an Australian Guild of Screen Composers Award for Special Achievement in Sound Design for her work on *Breathing Underwater* directed by Susan Murphy Dermody.

On her return to Melbourne she has composed the music for many film, theatre and dance productions. She has collaborated extensively with Jenny Kemp and has produced her own music theatre works. Previously she worked with the Alison Tilson, Sue Brooks, Sue Maslin team on *Road to Nhill* for which she was nominated for an AFI Award and Film Critics Circle Award for Best Score in a Feature Film.

Orchestration: Ricky Edwards
Vocals: Shelley Scown
Koto and Shamisen: Satsuki Odamura
Guitar: John Phillips
Percussion: Peter Neville
Drums: Peter Jones
Music recorded at Woodstock Studios
Engineer: Robin May

Additional recording: Bondi Studios
Engineer: Peter Winkler
Mastering for CD: Move Records studio
Mastering engineer: Vaughan McAlley

BONUS MOVIE TRAILER ON ORIGINAL CD – CD-ROM PLAYS
IN MAC OR PC COMPUTERS WITH QUICKTIME PLAYER OR
WINDOWS MEDIA PLAYER – DOUBLE-CLICK ON THE FILE
"J-STORY.MPG".

I am grateful to Naomi Ota for her help
in telephoning a music store in Okinawa
and helping me to track down different
traditional versions of the folksongs
used in the film. I am also grateful to the
very gracious Ryuichi Sakamoto for the
inspiration for the setting of *Chinsagu No
Hana*.
ELIZABETH DRAKE



FILM FINANCE CORPORATION AUSTRALIAN in association with **SHOWTIME AUSTRALIA, SCREENWEST INC AND THE LOTTERIES COMMISSION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**
and **FILM VICTORIA** present **A GECKO FILMS PRODUCTION**

TONI COLLETTE GOTARO TSUNASHIMA "JAPANESE STORY" MATTHEW DYKTYNSKI LYNETTE CURRAN YUMIKO TANAKA KATE ATKINSON BILL YOUNG

Casting **DINA MANN** Film Editor **JILL BILCOCK A.S.E., A.C.E.** Director of Photography **IAN BAKER A.C.S.** Music by **ELIZABETH DRAKE** Production Design **PADDY REARDON**

Costume Designer **MARGOT WILSON** Co-Producers **SUE BROOKS & ALISON TILSON** Written by **ALISON TILSON** Producer **SUE MASLIN** Director **SUE BROOKS**

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J A P A N E S E S T O R Y

- 1 Chinsagu No Hana 5'25"
- 2 Opening Titles 4'17"
- 3 "I hate Karaoke" 2'30"
- 4 Debris in a Desert 1'19"
- 5 Hotel 4'01"
- 6 "No more map" 1'21"
- 7 "Who are you?" 1'26"
- 8 "Very old rock" 3'14"
- 9 At the Waterhole 5'01"
- 10 Driving at Night 2'43"
- 11 In the Mirror 1'16"
- 12 "I'd like to be involved"
[Chinsagu No Hana] 14'33"
- 13 Japanese Story [closing credits] 3'04"

BONUS TRACKS

- 14 "Hiromitsu" [alternate At the Waterhole]
5'03"
- 15 Night Drive [unused] 2'39"

original soundtrack by Elizabeth Drake



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Music © 2003 Elizabeth Drake

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Winner of Best Feature Film Score in the 2004 AGSC
(APRA) Screen Music Awards!

Winner of Best Score in the 2003 AFI and Film Critics
Circle of Australia Awards!

nomination for Best Score at the ARIAs in 2004 and
nominated for Best Original Score in the 2003 IF Awards!

“one of the film’s many pleasures ... like another character in
the film ... original, delicately played and highly emotional,
Japanese Story makes for a haunting listen. *****”
(Erin Free, Filmink)

“Drake’s score forms a soundscape that successfully embodies
and combines the delicate sensibility of a Japanese tea party
with the shimmering ambience of the Australian outback.
There are many rewards here ...”
(Brad Green, Urban Cinefile)