



Presents

After *Wolf Children*,
the new film by Mamoru **HOSODA**

THE BOY AND THE BEAST

A Production by
Studio Chizu & Nippon TV

Duration: 1hour 58 minutes

Distribution



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SYNOPSIS

Shibuya, the human world, and Jutengai, the animal world... This is the story of a solitary boy and a solitary beast, each of whom lives in one of the two separate worlds. One day, the boy loses his way in the world of the beasts and becomes the disciple of the beast Kumatetsu, who gives him the name Kyuta. Their chance meeting is the beginning of an unbelievable adventure...

AN INTERVIEW WITH MAMORU HOSODA

How many years did you spend writing, graphically designing and directing your new film *The Boy and the Beast*?

My previous film, *Wolf Children*, came out in Japan in 2012 and it is our studio's practice not to start work on a new film until the release and promotion of our last film are over. I did not think up *The Boy and the Beast* during the production or release of *Wolf Children*, only much later, because I prefer to take the time to observe and understand audience reaction to a film, before starting on my next project. So it was only in early 2013 that I began to spend a year thinking it over with my team. I then spent six months writing the screenplay. I finished it in February 2014, and we began preparing the storyboard a month later. The film was divided into four parts for working on the animation. We began work on the first part in May, and on the other parts through June 2015, which is to say for a period of eleven months.

In *Wolf Children* the audience is on the side of the mother who sacrifices herself for her children, and who needs to let them go and choose their destiny as humans or as wolves. In *The Boy and the Beast*, we follow young Kyuta, who learns to live without his parents, and who must also choose between the human world and the world of animals. Why does this exploration of family ties fuel your work as an author and director so much?

When I decided to become a film director and devote myself to animation, I was far from imagining that I would devote a film to the theme of the family, and more precisely to a mother's fate. And still, I did direct *Wolf Children*. That film was a reflection of my personal life, because at that time my wife and I were trying to have a child, but alas, it didn't work. I looked for a way to console her during that very difficult period, something that would make her feel the joys of motherhood. That is how I decided to write and direct *Wolf Children*, to let her feel almost like a mother when seeing it. And as fate would have it, she finally became pregnant while we were working on the film. We had the joy of having our first child, a boy, in September 2012. Our family again grew when we had a girl. That allowed me to understand how complicated parents' lives become when they have a baby to care for, because they then devote most of their lives to it. I also realized that it is not only the mother and father who raise their children, but all the people around them. At each life stage, that entourage changes. That is what I saw when watching my child at one year old, and that is how that influenced the creation of this film...When you devote a film to the subject of family, many people think that you're doing it for commercial reasons. Because it speaks to everyone. But that is not how I was reasoning: what interests me most is to draw inspiration from my personal life. It is almost a necessity for me to write and direct this kind of film, based on what I myself have experienced and felt. I must say that since I trust only what my own life has inspired me with, I wonder at times if it will appeal to audiences and meet their expectations! I would also like to say that I am very concerned by a serious problem that affects Japan. Its aging population, because of the very low birth rate these days. Our society is changing, because the number of children being born is decreasing considerably. Although *The Boy and the Beast* is not about a true family, it is about the group that forms around Kyuta and becomes a substitute family to help him. I think that it is particularly important to speak about the current social role of the family.

In *The Boy and the Beast*, as in *Wolf Children*, we find the same attraction to animality, to freedom, to the pleasure of giving in to instinct, even if it creates a rupture with the normal trajectory of an individual in society...

I think that we tend to analyze things from a point of view that is too limited to recent references to urban life, while forgetting where we come from. That is the reason why, when I talk about 'we men', I am often referring to animals, whether as beings who were once our close cousins, or who have always lived as a part of human society. That is why I often use animals as characters.

But more precisely, in *The Boy and the Beast*, do the animals represent freedom from the constraints of society?

In the film, the boy goes back and forth between the world of animals and the human world. I created Jutengai, the animal universe, because I wanted non-human characters to judge the world of human beings. Thanks to that look from without, one can better underscore the stranger aspects of our lives, those we pay no attention to because they are so rooted in our daily lives: our constraints, the moments we feel unfree, social conventions ...And so some problems that take up so much space in our thoughts will seem relatively simple or hardly important to the characters of Jutengai, who have other points of view, and other ways of approaching things.

***The Boy and the Beast* is an initiatory tale. Do you think it accurate to say that in your films, initiatory tales all focus on freedom and transgressing established rules?**

Yes, it is true, that is one of the themes common to all my films. I would like to clarify something about the title of the film, because in its French (and English) translation, the words *bête*/beast are a bit different from the meaning of the word "bakemono" used in the original Japanese title. "Bakemono" designates something bestial, but in the pejorative sense of the word, to evoke, for example, a monstrous being, very different from a human being. This image of the monster is very present in our minds, but paradoxically, in real life, we often observe that human beings act much more cruelly than the most terrible fictional creatures. And on the other hand, in legends, some monsters do act with empathy, or sensitivity, and do good. I wanted to play on that contradiction by juxtaposing the real world with the animal world of Jutengai, when Kyuta goes back and forth between the two universes. Of course, the initiatory tale begins when our young hero finds himself in Jutengai, looking for freedom and his own fulfillment, while transgressing the rules of the human world.

Were you inspired by any specific Japanese legends when imagining Jutengai?

Yes, by many Japanese legends, but Chinese too. In Japan, there are very many tales that introduce "yokai" (phantoms, ghosts, mysterious supernatural beings) or monsters. As for Chinese influences, there is the famous legend of the Monkey King, which gave me the idea for Hyakushubo and Tatara, Kumatetsu's friends and traveling companions. But I didn't want the Chinese influence to be too strong in the story either. That is why I describe feasts that celebrate our numerous deities, like in the polytheistic culture of Japan, or when we come together to watch Sumo combats between warriors who are demigods, endowed with great powers. For me, the modern equivalent of those feasts is represented by the Shibuya district in Tokyo.

Why is Kumatetsu, Kyuta's mentor, a bear? Does that animal have any particular symbolic significance in Japan?

Yes, because in a tale known to every child in Japan, a young boy named Kintaro regularly fights with a bear, and thereby acquires great strength. There the bear is a symbol of initiation into life, and the development of a boy growing up to become a man. I also believe that it is the

strongest animal indigenous to Japan. And in those tales, baring one's sword to fight also symbolizes emancipating oneself and becoming a man.

Is there any animated film that influenced you particularly when imagining *The Boy and the Beast*?

Yes. And it goes back to when I was hired by the Toei animation studios in 1991. I liked the Disney feature-length cartoons so much back then, that I bought a compilation in a box set that cost an arm and a leg compared to my meager salary as a budding animator! One of them was the Disney version of *Beauty and the Beast*, which had a profound impact on me. It inspired me a great deal, because in that story you see the beast evolve: in the beginning, he is terrifying, but then he softens, when he comes into contact with Beauty, and he becomes nice. Then I wanted to see the Cocteau version, which I also liked very much. Like the Disney version, it made me want to make films as a director. And I confess that double influence in the title *The Boy and the Beast*!

Kumatetsu incites Kyuta to discover the strength within him, and that he is unaware of. Is that a way of telling young audiences to have confidence in themselves and to choose their way in life by themselves?

Many films deal with the relationship between master and disciple, but in most of them, we see disciples elevate themselves to the level of their professors and even surpass them. That is frequently the case in Jackie Chan adventure films, for example. I didn't want to repeat that kind of story in *The Boy and the Beast*, because even if the situation in the beginning obliges Kyuta to do what Kumatetsu tells him to, we soon realize that it is not only the master who is instructing the disciple, but that the opposite is true too often enough. Teaching is a two-way street, and that comes across in the dialogues of the film. I think that the same thing is true in relations between parents and children, who mutually teach each other many things. And since I often speak about family in my films, those are themes that keep coming back, because I think that they are very important.

Is Kumatetsu's handing down of knowledge, symbolized by the saber that is found again with Kyuta, your way of paying tribute to the mentors one encounters in a life? Did you yourself have mentors in animation?

Yes, I did have a kind of master in my life, when working at Toei Animation. At the time, it was a very large studio that employed fifty directors, veterans and beginners. As an animator, I worked for directors, and one of them was Shigeyasu Yamauchi, who taught me practically everything there is to know about animation. He directed most notably the cinema versions of *Dragonball Z* and *Knights of the Zodiac*. I was ready to work very hard for him, and to sacrifice myself more than for other directors, even if the tasks very extremely arduous. I learned a lot of things thanks to him, especially not to ever give up, whatever the difficulties that you encounter in realizing your project. This attitude stood out in contrast with other directors, who thought it was enough to follow the orders of the studio and who abandoned their ideas by the wayside. Shigeyasu Yamauchi has always remained faithful to himself and his ideas, and his way of working inspired me enormously.

Let's go back to the point that is at the heart of the film: do you think that in real life, mentors must also feed their experience by opening up to the audacity and new ideas of the young?

Yes, absolutely, and moreover, that tendency is being accentuated by the way our society is evolving. In yesterday's Japan, the influence of feudal times was still very strong, and people thought that an older person always knew how to gauge a problem or situation better, because of his experience, whereas a youngster was considered immature and therefore incapable of finding the best solution. Today things have changed, and that way of thinking is considered

archaic. Mentors and masters think that they can learn new things by coming into contact with younger people, and in many situations, younger people can teach something to their seniors. There is a greater openness of mind, and the general consensus is that you should not deprive yourself of the pleasure of evolving in life, whatever your age.

How did you hit upon the visually very potent idea of the black hole created by a pain that one is unable to surmount?

On the path of a growing youngster, there are always painful moments that are felt with particular intensity during the crisis of adolescence. At that age, boys and girls feel a kind of emptiness, a sense of lack, they observe with frustration everything that differentiates their lives from those of adults, who have the possibility of acting independently. They are equally aware of their lacks and their imperfections, which results in lots of complexes. That is an unavoidable stage in their existence, something that everyone has known. I wanted to use a shape to express that lack and that feeling of emptiness which plagues youngsters, and I thought that a black hole would be an effective graphic representation of that feeling. It had the advantage of conveying its force, without necessarily being classified good or bad. I feel personally annoyed when things are told simplistically in a film or novel, and are designated as being good or bad. Life is not that Manichaeian. Similarly, I show that black hole as being an ordeal, a stage that two characters in the film have to go through, with each reacting in their own way. That is why I did not want to specify the nature of this phenomenon, just as one cannot say, when seeing a real black hole in the universe, where the dividing line occurs between light and darkness. In the film, it represents a climactic moment, an inevitable catharsis which then allows the protagonists to start off on another phase of their lives.

You said earlier that you were prompted by the festive aspect of the modern neighborhood of Shibuya to choose it as background for some of the scenes of the film. But was that also a way to create an even sharper contrast with the rural environments and the feudal world of Jutengai?

No, I wasn't trying to play on the contrast between a big modern city and a country town, surrounded by nature. Shibuya is a place where people go for fun, to feel happy, to have a good time together. It is characterized by a pleasant atmosphere and even by a feeling of festive communion. The mood there is totally different from the business districts of the capital. There are not many places like it in Japan, and that is why I have chosen it, although without trying to pretend that you won't run into miserable people and drop outs from society there too: which is exactly the case of Kyuta when he first arrives there. You see lots of young people leading lonely lives. But it is usually thought of as a very vibrant neighborhood, and is also known for its steep streets, which gives it a bit of a Mediterranean look. That is why they have given the name 'Spanish street' to a steep street located right next to the immense Shibuya Parco shopping center. I must say, that is what made me want to give Jutengai a Mediterranean feel, and to surround Kumatetsu's house with steep and narrow streets.

Some live action samurai films seem to have inspired you. One thinks most notably of the most famous of them all, *Seven Samurai* by Akira Kurosawa...

That is exact, and besides, there is something else I can tell you. Kumatetsu's big saber is the same as Kikuchiyo's, the character played by Toshiro Mifune in *Seven Samurais*. The Kurosawa film was shot in B&W, but I am sure that if it were in color, you would discover that the saber sheathe is red, just like Kumatetsu's!

What interests you most in feudal Japan, its settings and characters? The samurai code of honor and courage? The possibility of describing epic combats?

It was not the code of honor of the era that interested me. It was its chaotic aspect and its vitality. *Seven Samurai* takes place a bit before what we call the Tokugawa Shogunate, the period during which there were many wars between the different factions and the shoguns, and during which no one knew who would win and end up reigning. China also went through similar events. Extraordinary things always occur during periods of chaos. But again, talking about the past in Japan, just before the Meiji restoration in 1868 there were some youngsters who fought to make things evolve. I love the excitement of those periods of upheaval.

Your films are a remarkable mix of emotion and fantasy. You carry the torch of Miyasaki, but adding your own original and personal vision as to what a great animated film that is meant for adults as well as kids could be like...

When I was a student, I naturally had a great deal of respect for the great director Miyasaki. At that time, his latest film to be released was *Kiki's Delivery Service*. Miyasaki was a kind of hero to me, and also an example, because I wanted to become a director. Once I myself had become a director, things obviously changed. As a creator, I did not want to be influenced or dominated by his work. We later became competitors, although we made very different films. Besides, the animated film that marked me most during my childhood was not one of his, it was *Galaxy Express 999*, directed by Rintaro. I saw it at the movies when it came out in the summer of 1979. It is again about the initiatory adventures of a young boy. That made me aware of the fact that those animated films that were made to entertain young audiences over the summer months also had the vocation of presenting tales of journeys during which the young heroes toughen up and grow. I still feel today that that is one of the most important roles of animated cinema. That is what incited me to direct *The Girl Who Leapt Through Time* in 2006, with a heroine.

Are you saddened by the ambient cynicism of our times? You who envisage your films as a way to do people some good, do you think that that is part of the mission of storytellers today?

Yes, I believe so, and I think about that very often. Today, there are multiple social networks that are part of the progress brought by internet, but people use them to get things off their chest, and tend to use them as an easy way to express negative opinions. I find that very sad. Like many creators and artists, I try to swim against the tide and talk more about positive things, things that give hope and make people dream. I feel that this is one of the missions and particularities of animated cinema. Documentaries and live action films, on the other hand, are better equipped to criticize the negative aspects and problems of the world we live in.

What touches you most when audiences tell you what they feel when watching your films?

As we said, many of my films deal with the theme of an initiatory voyage and the passage to adulthood. But in real life too, the audiences of my films have grown up since my début in 1999 with the film *Digimon*. I was 30 years old then. I am 47 now, but I feel like I made that film yesterday. One day, a very tall man came up to me to say that he had seen *Digimon* several times and that he had liked it a lot when he was 10 or 11 years old. When such a giant tells me that, I feel old indeed! I have also noticed that the titles of the films people come to talk to me about change as the years go by. Very recently, a very beautiful woman told me that she had been marked during her childhood by *The Girl Who Leapt Through Time*. When a ravishing moviegoer tells me that, I am obviously delighted! I generally take all those accounts as pennies from heaven, and they bring me much joy.

The French author Antoine de Saint Exupéry, who like you thought a lot about young people, said, when writing *The Little Prince*: “All adults were once children, but few of them remember that.” With your films, you prove that you never forgot that you were once a child. I feel touched, happy and very honored to hear you say that, because I do know that beautiful phrase of Saint Exupéry’s, and I ponder it quite a lot.

BIOGRAPHY

MAMORU HOSODA

Director Mamoru HOSODA was born on September 19th, 1967 in Japan in Toyama Prefecture. He worked as an animator at the Toei-Doga studio (today called Toei Animation) in 1991. He worked his way up the ladder at the studio by working on its main series - *Dragon Ball Z* (1993), *Slam Dunk* (1994-1995), *Sailor Moon* (1996) – and then creating storyboards during the second half of the 90s. He thus became a director. In 1999 he helmed the short subject *Digimon Adventure*, and then his first feature-length film, *Digimon, The Movie* (2000), based on the famous series, for which he also directed several episodes. In 2003, he directed the commercial film *Superflat Monogram* for the spring-summer Louis Vuitton collection, then in 2005 the film version of the series *One Piece - One Piece : Baron Omatsuri and The Secret Island*. That same year he became independent and directed at Madhouse studio his third feature length animated film, *The Girl Who Leapt Through Time* (2006). Despite a limited release in a small number of theaters, the film was a resounding success with young audiences and played for a long time. It also received numerous awards, including the very first award for best animated film, created by the Japanese Academy of Cinema. 2009 marked another milestone in Hosoda's career. For the first time, he wrote a screenplay that he was to direct: *Summer Wars*. It was an enormous success, seen in theaters by 1.26 million Japanese moviegoers. Like his previous film, *Summer Wars* obtained numerous awards in both Japan and abroad. It was part of the Berlin Film Festival selection in 2010. Hosoda was nominated as best director at the Annie Awards in 2011, which made him one of the most renowned directors of Japanese animated cinema. That same year, Hosoda founded his own production company, Studio CHIZU with producer Yuichiro Saito. *Wolf Children*, the first film produced by his company in 2012 was an enormous critical and popular success, seen by 3.44 million people in Japan. Reactions were also glowingly emotional in France. The record set in Japan by *Wolf Children* was surpassed in August 2015 by *The Boy and the Beast*, after only one month in the theaters. This new triumph confirms that Mamoru Hosoda figures as one of the most important screenwriters and directors of animated cinema, of whatever country.

INTERVIEW WITH

YUICHIRO SAITO

PRODUCER

Mamoru Hosoda's loyal collaborator, producer Yuichiro Saito and he created Studio Chizu, located in Ogikubo (Tokyo) and exclusively dedicated to creating feature films.

What encouraged you to produce Hosoda's new film *The Boy and the Beast*?

One of the traditions of feature-length animated films that came out in the summer in Japan was to present the adventures of a boy who sets off on a trip and confronts dangers that make him grow up and become an adult. Since that type of film had not been produced for some time, we wanted to go back and choose a young boy as the hero, and imagined the film as a great entertainment. There are also reasons that have to do with Hosoda's personal life, as there have been since the beginning of his directing career. His mother had passed away during the production of *Summer Wars*, his first film devoted to the subject of family. Hosoda felt guilty about not having thanked her enough while she was alive. Then, when he wanted to become a father, he felt prompted to make *Wolf Children*. After that film, he had his first child, and that new way of looking at things as a father incited him to make *Boy and the Beast*. Watching his son grow up, he wondered how he could hearten children who live in our constantly changing society. He wanted to make a film that presents the process of teenagers growing toward adulthood in a positive way, so that young audiences feel better understood and better about living in today's context. When Hosoda became a father for the first time in his life, he put himself in the place of his child growing up and adopted his view of the world. He also wondered about what we as adults, parents, and society, could do to safeguard the future of this new generation. Growing up is an experience we have all gone through, but the process evolves as time passes and as society goes through one upheaval after another. In this period of great change, we all wonder about how we should live, how we can help each other, reinforcing the ties that bind us together. This awareness has come to pass in Japan and everywhere else in the world. From the very conception of the project, Hosoda tried to root this story in our contemporary context. It was also with that in mind that we wanted to make a summer action film that would be simultaneously honest, exciting and refreshing.

Which aspects of this film will be appealing to both children and adults?

In animation, in cinema, as in all the other form of artistic expression, it is diversity that brings a certain kind of richness to whatever you are presenting. With this idea in mind, Hosoda and I wanted to create animation films much like those that came out in the summer when we were kids. Those films lit up our childhoods and allowed us to live the most varied experiences vicariously. They constitute precious memories. That long, trans-generational tradition of animated films, and its way of approaching social subjects have been created by the successive contributions of our elders. Their works make up a huge and rich universe. It was not created by one director, or one studio, because such a tradition could not be perpetuated by just one individual. I am convinced that we must all do our part in keeping it alive, and to do that, we must continue to hand on the torch.

How does Hosoda work?

What is particular about his creative process is that he finds motifs and subjects for stories right under his nose, which explains why he often talks about the family! I don't know if it's his life that lends itself to being transposed to film, or if it's cinema that has had that influence on his life. In any case, he thinks that the joys and problems he meets with in his own family probably exist in all the families of the world. And if we manage to solve the problems that plague us in our films by blending the real and the imaginary worlds, we may be able to make a modest contribution to solving everyone else's too. Hosoda wants to share these reflections and his positive view of the future with people from all over the world, thanks to the techniques and means of artistic expression of animated film.

In *Boy and the Beast*, several adult characters learn new things and mature as human beings while raising a child, or contributing to its education.

It is perfectly normal to raise your own child, but this film shows the importance of participating in the growth of others' children, in every sense of the word. In other words, an adult or a society that participates in the growth of a child finally learns new things thanks to that experience and thanks to that child. One could say that those adults "grow up" too, and enrich their lives thanks to that experience. In this film, several characters serve as "mentors" to Kyuta : Hyakushubo, Tatara, Kaede all encourage and Kyuta in their own way. It's a little as if we helped with the growth of our friends' and neighbors' children, which allows us to discover new worlds. That kind of mutual enrichment can occur with someone who is not a family relation, whatever his or her age. Such an exchange can be the at the source of many of the joys and delights of life.

How would you describe the vision of Hosoda the filmmaker?

One of Hosoda's ideas about cinema is: "Animated film must aim for an ideal." I think that a film is something that you watch alone, in tête à tête with the screen, and that has the capacity of revealing to us our own vision of life and our deepest feelings at the moment we discover it. The more familiar and universal the themes, the more the film reflects our innermost being, like a mirror. Since *Wolf Children*, I often have the impression that that is one of the characteristics of Hosoda's cinema. Let me give you an example. In *Wolf Children*, we see a real mountain called Tsurugidake. At a screening before the French release, a viewer said it was the Alps. We travelled all over Japan to promote the film, and everywhere we went, viewers said it was Mount Daisen, Mount Gassan, or whatever mountain was closest to home. The mountain in the film is actually Tsurugidake, but each viewer appropriates the film in his or her own way, projects his or her own most precious memories, his or her present memories, his or her own life. Since the film serves as a mirror with variegated effects of reflection, the landscapes are perceived differently by each viewer. *Boy and the Beast* is a simple story, but thanks to that simplicity, the mirror effect is even greater and multiplies its reflections. That proves that the 'ideal that we can reach', that Hosoda describes in this film, is very close to us and very contemporary.

The logo of Studio Chizu depicts a young woman jumping. Could you tell us about this choice? Does it also represent your desire to appeal to international audiences?

This character running and jumping into the future represents the vitality of the main characters of Hosoda's cinema, whether they are male or female has no importance. It represents someone who takes his or her own initiative, who lives life decisively. With no fear of change, the character keeps on running into the future. In the face of all the new possibilities offered by the future, we want to take up new challenges with each film we produce. This time we worked in association with the French company Gaumont, the oldest production and distribution company in the world. I would like for us to challenge ourselves constantly, so that Hosoda's films are one day part of the history of world cinema, above and beyond the domain of animation. I would like for audiences everywhere on the planet to discover that Mamoru Hosoda is a director capable of making so many people happy. In the beginning, Hosoda wanted to become a painter. Cinema is part of the history of Western art that is 2000 years old. It is in keeping with that history of art that Hosoda tries to meet the challenge of making films that propose new values... a cinema that entertains both children and adults, and that takes a positive approach to the future. As a producer, I want to devote myself, heart and soul, to doing whatever is necessary for Hosoda's films to be the best-made possible, and to be shown in optimal conditions. I think that *Boy and the Beast* embodies the new challenges that Hosoda is taking up. To tell the truth, my capacity as a producer has not yet reached the level of expertise that Hosoda has as a director, but I am working at it! In the future, I would like to go on renewing the tradition of cinema to bring pleasure to all generations.

With the original voices of

KOJI YAKUSHO
AOI MIYAZAKI
SHOTA SOMETANI
SUZU HIROSE
KAZUHIRO YAMAJI
MAMORU MIYANO
KAPPEI YAMAGUCHI
KEISHI NAGATSUKA
KUMIKO ASO
HARU KUROKI
SUMIRE MOROHOSHI
MOMOKA OHNO
MASAHIKO TSUGAWA
LILY FRANKY
YO OIZUMI

Written and directed by
Based on an original story by
Animation director

MAMORU HOSODA
MAMORU HOSODA
TAKAAKI YAMASHITA
TATSUZO NISHITA
TAKASHI OMORI
YOHEI TAKAMATSU
YOICHI NISHIKAWA
MASAKATSU TAKAGI
GAUMONT
STUDIO CHIZU

Artistic directors

Original music
International sales
A film produced by

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STUDIO CHIZU

