

JANUS FILMS

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Ryuichi Sakamoto | Opus

A celebration of an artist's life in the purest sense, *Ryuichi Sakamoto | Opus* is the swan song of one of the world's greatest musicians. As a parting gift, in late 2022 Ryuichi Sakamoto mustered all of his energy to leave us with one final performance: a concert film featuring just him and his piano. Curated and sequenced by Sakamoto himself, the twenty pieces of his played in the film wordlessly tell the story of his life and his wide-ranging oeuvre. The selection spans his entire career, from his pop-star period with Yellow Magic Orchestra and his magnificent scores for filmmaker Bernardo Bertolucci to his meditative final album, *12*. Intimately filmed in a space he knew well and surrounded by his most trusted collaborators—including director Neo Sora, his son—Sakamoto bares his soul through his exquisitely haunting melodies, knowing this was the last time he would be able to present his art.

CREDITS

Directed by Neo Sora
Director of photography Bill Kirstein
Produced by Norika Sora
Albert Tholen
Aiko Masubuchi
Eric Nyari
Executive producer Jeremy Thomas
Editor Takuya Kawakami
Sound ZAK

Japan | 2023 | 103 minutes | Black & White | In Japanese with English subtitles | 1.78:1 aspect ratio

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A STATEMENT FROM RYUICHI SAKAMOTO

From September 8 to 15, 2022, I worked on something important to me: filming *Ryuichi Sakamoto | Opus*. The project was conceived as a way to record my performances—while I was still able to perform—in a way that is worth preserving for the future. We borrowed the NHK Broadcasting Center's 509 Studio to record in, which is a place that I think offers the finest acoustics in Japan. The director, Neo Sora, was quite strict. He insisted that I decide far in advance on the entire repertoire of the twenty pieces that I was going to perform so that ample time could be spent preparing for the shoot. I played every piece at home, which we recorded on an iPhone to construct the overall composition of the concert that will express the progression of time from morning into night. Everything was meticulously storyboarded so that the camera positions and the lighting changed significantly with each song.

Heading the large crew of nearly thirty people was cinematographer Bill Kirstein, who traveled from the U.S. to shoot the film using three 4K cameras. As for me, I went into the shoot a little nervous, thinking this might be my last chance to share my performance with everyone in this way. We recorded a few songs a day, with a lot of care. I played some pieces that I had never played as solo piano performances, such as "The Wuthering Heights" (1992) and "Ichimei – Small Happiness" (2011). I played "Tong Poo" (1978) in a new arrangement, at a slower tempo than I've ever performed it. So, in some sense, while thinking of this as my last opportunity to perform, I also felt that I was able to break new ground. Simply playing a few songs a day with a lot of concentration was all I could muster at this point in my life. Perhaps due to the exertion, I felt utterly hollow afterward, and my condition worsened for about a month. Even so, I feel relieved that I was able to record, before my death, a performance that I was satisfied with.

TRACK LIST

"LOL: Lack of Love"
"BB"
"andata"
"Solitude"
"For Jóhann"
"Aubade 2020"
"Ichimei – Small Happiness"
"Mizu no Naka no Bagatelle"
"Bibo no Aozora"
"Aqua"
"Tong Poo"
"The Wuthering Heights"
"20220302 – sarabande"
"The Sheltering Sky"
"20180219" (with prepared piano)
"The Last Emperor"
"Trio on"
"Happy End"
"Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence"
"Opus"



NEO SORA FILMOGRAPHY

- 2020 *The Chicken* (short)
2022 *Sugar Glass Bottle* (short)

RYUICHI SAKAMOTO SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 1983 *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence*, dir. Nagisa Oshima
(actor and composer)
1987 *The Last Emperor*, dir. Bernardo Bertolucci
(actor and composer)
1990 *The Sheltering Sky*, dir. Bernardo Bertolucci
(composer)
1991 *High Heels*, dir. Pedro Almodóvar
(composer)
1992 *Wuthering Heights*, dir. Peter Kosminsky
(composer)
1993 *Little Buddha*, dir. Bernardo Bertolucci
(composer)
2002 *Femme Fatale*, dir. Brian De Palma
(composer)
2004 *Tony Takitani*, dir. Jun Ichikawa
(composer)
2011 *Hara-Kiri: Death of a Samurai*, dir. Takashi Miike
(composer)
2015 *The Revenant*, dir. Alejandro G. Iñárritu
(composer)
2017 *The Fortress*, dir. Hwang Dong-hyuk
(composer)
2020 *Love After Love*, dir. Ann Hui
(composer)

RYUICHI SAKAMOTO SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- 1978 *Thousand Knives*
1980 *B-2 Unit*
1981 *BGM* (as part of Yellow Magic Orchestra)
1981 *Technodelic* (as part of Yellow Magic Orchestra)
1986 *Illustrated Musical Encyclopedia*
1987 *Neo Geo*
1989 *Beauty*
1991 *Heartbeat*
1994 *Sweet Revenge*
1996 *1996*
1999 *BTTB*
2001 *Casa* (with Jaques Morelenbaum and Paula Morelenbaum)
2002 *Vrioon* (with Alva Noto)
2004 *CHASM*
2009 *Out of Noise*
2012 *Three* (with Jaques Morelenbaum and Judy Kang)
2017 *async*
2023 *12*

